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FRIENDSHIP OF BOOKS



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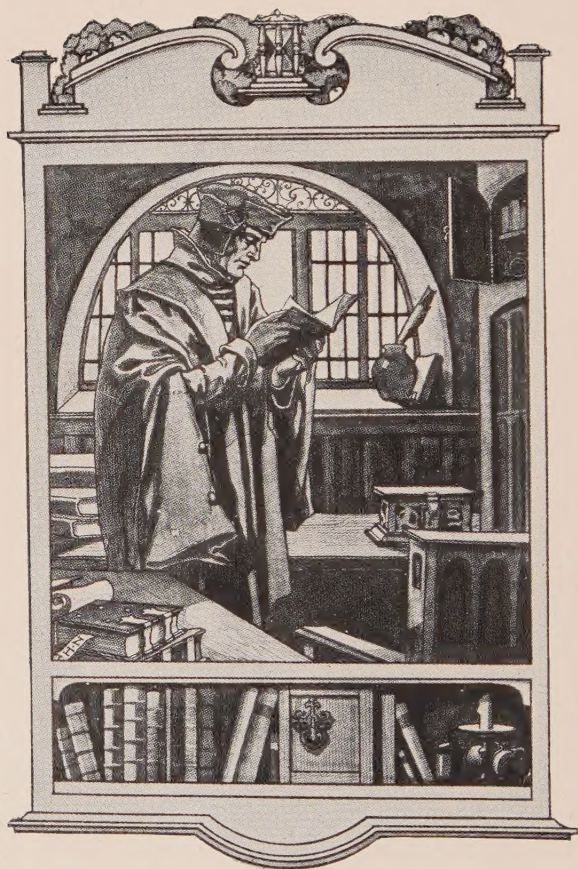
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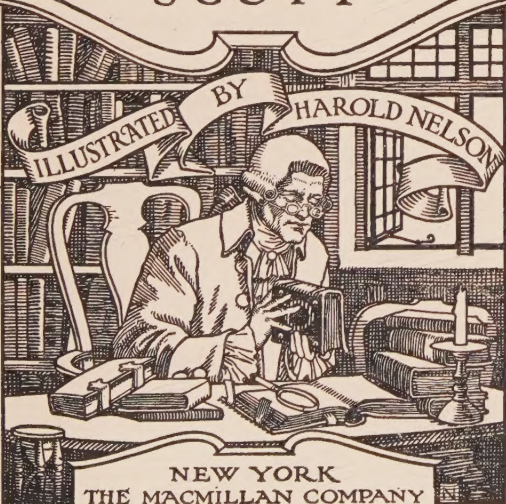
TORONTO



The FRIENDSHIP OF BOOKS

*Edited, with an
introduction, by*

TEMPLE
SCOTT



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TO
FREDA
FROM HER GRATEFUL
FATHER

*"How soon a smile of God can change the world!
How we are made for happiness — how work
Grows play, adversity a winning fight!"*

ROBERT BROWNING.

The editor gratefully acknowledges his indebtedness to The Macmillan Company, Mr. Richard Le Gallienne, Mr. Gerald Stanley Lee, and Mr. Charles Ferguson for their courteous permission to use extracts from their publications and writings.

Read, mark, learn and inwardly digest.

BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER.

Without books, God is silent.

THOS. V. BARTHOLIN.

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If a book interests you, if it seems strong to you, you may be sure that the man who wrote it, wrote it on his knees.

BLAISE PASCAL.

THE FRIENDSHIP OF BOOKS

INTRODUCTION

“A GOOD book,” said Milton, “is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit.” A library thus takes on the impressiveness of a wonderful salon of the great men of the ages. Homer and Plato; Æschylus and Aristophanes; Dante and Chaucer; Shakespeare and Cervantes; Wordsworth and George Meredith; Goethe and Browning; and Carlyle and Emerson, — these are no longer dead volumes or gilded titles, but disembodied spirits assembled in a room to hold converse with us. And we, poor self-satisfied creatures, we have the privilege of talking with them and even of calling them our friends! Do we realize what this means? I am sure we do not. At any rate, we do not act as if we did. It is true we satisfy our consciences and our vanity by conferring on them the honorary degree of “classic”; but even in doing so we condemn them to a permanent seclusion in cloistral solitudes, as if they were out of place in the hurly-burly of our every-day life, and ought truly to have no part in it. At the bare mention of the word “classic,” a wave of boredom overcomes us, and we politely turn the conversation or wonder “what the devil he’s doing in this galley.” Books and life would seem to us to be two widely separated facts, with little or no relation to each other. Life, we say, is real and earnest; but

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a book at best is but a help to make us forget life's troubles and travails.

And yet could we meet Shakespeare in the flesh we should flutter ourselves into a state bordering on imbecility did he but so much as nod a "God e'n" to us.

"Oh, did you once see Shelley plain,
And did he stop and speak to you,
And did you speak to him again?
How strange it seems and new."

What curious fellows we mortals be! We tumble over each other to catch a glimpse of a commonplace man, riding on horseback, because he is said to be a king of a country, or a great captain of industry; but when a real king of men sits with us at home, we take the first opportunity to get out of his way. I suppose it is much easier to look at a man's uniform than to talk with a man's soul.

Still, we are not all such inhospitable beings. Some of us, indeed, feel it even proper to be so far courteous and urbane as to welcome the "classic" into our homes, clothe him in fine raiment, and, though we give him only the freedom of our libraries and carefully lock him up in book-cases, yet we do occasionally look him up. Others even go so far as to make a friend or two; for it is said to be the mark of a gentleman that he have a well-stocked library and a speaking acquaintance with some good books. Certainly, we must be gentlemen, even if we are occasionally bored. There is, indeed, much to be said for a convention which compels us to assume a virtue we have not got. Perhaps the practice of this assumption may breed a habit; and a decent habit is far more desirable than an indecent one, or than no habit at all.

I would credit a man with a great many other virtues

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if he surprised me with an apt quotation from Horace in reply to my question as to the state of the market or the condition of crops. I am afraid, however, that I am not likely to be so surprised. The good people up in New Hampshire, where I sometimes seek cooler breezes than the summer-heated city affords, think me but a simple-minded citizen. They welcome me with broad smiles, and proceed at once to explain the real meaning of life, which is not to be found in books. I listen amused and gladly pay the tolls. They have been "sitting up nights" half the winter to think out new ways of explaining the meaning of life, as they understand it, to "city folk," and when the summer comes they are so agog with the opportunity to be seized that they forget all about their farms. When I catch them unawares, as is not often the case, I mildly suggest, that this is not the way to prosper. This is but hastening the ills which make men decay. "Read a good book," I say, "during the winter, instead of planning foolish methods; a book that will teach you how to do your business, how to be decent and fair-dealing, and make you understand how to manage your farm, if you are not too lazy to manage it. What you want," I add, "is a friend who can be honest and sincere with you. You don't believe that your neighbor would be that kind of a friend? You think he is like yourself? Well, don't go to him; go to a book. That, at any rate, you cannot accuse of either insincerity or dishonesty." My Uncle Rube looks, perhaps, even more foolish than ordinarily and laughs. He would like to say that it is much easier to make two cents extra by selling a quart of milk to "city folk" than learn the science of agriculture or the ways of a true heart; but he rubs his scrubby beard in-

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stead, while a cunning look comes into his eyes. What he does say but shows his narrowness of vision and limited understanding: "Books! why books is only for school-masters and preachers and writing-men!"

Well, a good many of us are like Uncle Rube, in this respect. We do not take much account of books in this game of life we are playing. We prefer learning wisdom at first hand; with the result that half our lifetime is wasted in finding out for ourselves that which books could have taught us in a few years, had we the temper to sit at the feet of the really wise men. I am not undervaluing the virtue of experience; but I do feel strongly that we miss the real virtue of books. Literature is less than life, but literature is one of the most potent teachers in life. We go to wise friendly men for their wisdom of experience; but what, after all, are books if they are not the embodied thoughts of men's deepest experiences? Surely the man who will write a book, that is his precious life-spirit, is the best friend any of us can have in life! Let us leave out of consideration the mere pleasure of reading, the mere amusement afforded us by books to pass away time that is heavy or sorrow-freighted, the mere instruction they give us of the facts of nature's phenomena, there yet remains in books that splendid offering of the hearts of men which is given in real life, as friendship, to but very few of us. When, in life, we have been blessed, after many years, with the gift of one true friend, we grapple him to our souls with hooks of steel. He is a stay and a comfort and a sympathizer; he is our adviser, our helper in difficulties, our true-hearted and brotherly counsellor. We cannot love him too much. Yet when we are offered this blessing, not once but many times

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over in books, we pass by and decline it. And we wonder why we are foolish, and poor, and fearful, and unhappy.

"Oh, but," you say, "it's not the same thing to read cold unsympathetic print as to hear the word from a living friend. The friend I understand; but the print is so impersonal. And besides, the people who wrote these books did not write for me, they wrote in a general way." I know a book does not touch you immediately as does a friend's dear face; but that is your fault. You have but to read with feeling and the book will become a living person to you. It will not then be "the plays of Shakespeare," you are reading, but your friend Shakespeare to whom you are listening. Take a few sentences out of any of the plays and test what I say.

"But I do think it is their husbands' faults
If wives do fall. Say that they slack their duties
And pour out treasures into foreign laps,
Or else break out in peevish jealousies,
Throwing restraint upon us; or say they strike us,
Or scant our former having in despite;
Why, we have galls, and though we have some grace,
Yet have we some revenge. Let husbands know
Their wives have sense like them; they see and smell
And have their palates both for sweet and sour
As husbands have. What is it that they do
When they change us for others? Is it sport?
I think it is. And doth affection breed it?
I think it doth. Is't frailty that thus errs?
It is so too. And have not we affections,
Desires for sport, and frailty, as men have?
Then let them use us well; else let them know
The ills we do, their ills instruct us so."

Do we want a wiser or a more intimate friend than this to tell us how to behave to our wives; or to put the case

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for women more fairly and more finely? And how appealing is the voice of the lady who is speaking for her sex! "Nay, an thou canst not smile as the wind sits, thou'lt catch cold shortly." That's a friend's advice; and a good friend's too. This is not the cold language of print; the ring of a human voice is in it — and think on it, Shakespeare's voice!

"Cowards die many times before their deaths;
The valiant never taste of death but once.
Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,
It seems to me most strange that men should **fear**,
Seeing that death, a necessary end,
Will come when it will come."

"Men must endure
Their going hence, even as their coming **hither**:
Ripeness is all."

But these citations could be multiplied to the volume of a cyclopædia.

As to the second objection against books, that the writers of them write in a general way and not for the individual, that remark is as shallow as it is common. As if any one of us were of a new order of being, or were not living the life of this earth! What is it, indeed, that constitutes the genius of a Shakespeare or a Homer or a Dante or a Cervantes if it be not that quality of soul which ripens and grows to fullness on the wrecks of such experiences as we poor lesser mortals daily encounter and rarely overcome? These little questionings of our souls, these little difficulties in our ways, that look so important for us, have long since been solved by the master-knowers of the problems of life. Or, if they have not all been solved, they have been attacked and suffered; and here, in their books,

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are the experiences of the trials told which, if they make not straight the crooked ways, are yet heartening to read of, and show us, at least, how to wear a brave and debonair grace, and to "out frown false fortune's frown" despite everything. And this also is a friend's part, is it not?

Why is it that we have that sense of detachment toward a book we do not have toward a friend? I cannot find any justification for it. We would give heed to a friend's letter; why is it we are so indifferent to a wise man's book, which is but his letter to us? That we are indifferent is undoubted, or we should not be still doing the foolish things that Montaigne, for instance, has long since shown us it is not well for us to do. I think this attitude of ours must be due to a wrong point of view. We read books not so much for what they can teach us as for the amusement they can give us. We find the business of life to be so exacting that we are too tired to further employ ourselves in theoretical reflections on its problems, and ask only for what will please us and make us forget ourselves. It is the same with our attitude toward the theatre. We ask it to amuse us, to make us laugh, or to interest us by arousing pleasing sensations. We want the theatre of entertainment and not the theatre of enlightenment. I cannot help feeling that this excessive demand for amusement is a fatal weakness in our nature. We run to extremes. We are either always working or always playing. And that is a mark of an unhealthy condition of both mind and body. If we worked less, we might play more sanely; and if we played more sanely, we might work more wisely. As it is, our play and work are both feverish, and the virtues of each are lost to us.

Now ask of your friends, the books, and listen to what

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they will tell you of this waywardness of temper. And you will know they are right.

“These violent delights have violent ends
And in their triumph die, like fire and powder,
Which as they kiss consume.”

“Then welcome each rebuff
That turns earth’s smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand, but go !
Be our joys three parts pain !
Strive, and hold cheap the strain ;
Learn, nor account the pang ; dare, never grudge the throe !”

And if you wonder how it is that the poets know all this, and why you should give heed to them, Shelley will tell you, and, I can assure you, he knew.

“Weep no more ! Oh, weep no more !
Young buds sleep in the root’s white core.
Dry your eyes ! Oh, dry your eyes !
For I was taught in Paradise
To ease my breast of melodies.”

And Carlyle, who was himself a tough fighter in life, he had a great respect for this same poet. “How does the poet,” he says, “speak to men with power, but by being still more a man than they.”

There you have it. The book that lives is the book that we dare not let die, for our souls’ sakes. The man who wrote it was more of a man than we who read it. We know this instinctively, and we know it undoubtedly. Those of us who are really doing the things that count have drunk inspiration from such a book, and because of this they keep the flame of a great man’s spirit burning. They, in their turn, are more of men than we who have not sought the fine friendship of books. They have lis-

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tened to the poets' songs "which always find us young and always keep us so."

And if we dare not let such books die, what does this mean? It means that we cannot live without their friendship. It means that the wisdom of the men who were more of men than we are is necessary for us in order that we may be even the decent men we are.

The Jews have a beautiful Rabbinical legend which tells that the world is kept from utter depravity and even physical destruction by the existence of Thirty-Six righteous men. Who they are or where they are is not known, nor, says the legend, are they themselves aware of their own value to mankind. When one of their number dies, there is always, so long as it shall please the Omnipotent, a righteous man born to take his place so that the required Thirty-Six shall never be wanting. In this wise does the Divine Spirit become active among mortals and His Presence made manifest to those who have ears to hear and eyes to see.

I think of this legend as I ask myself how it comes about, in the midst of so large an indifference to the friendship of books, that the great traditions of wisdom and love are still kept alive to help us in spite of ourselves. I please myself with applying this legend by way of an explanation and to say of the World of Literature as the Jews said of the moral world, that it is kept lovely and inspiring by a number of fine souls who devote themselves and their lives to the perfect expression in words of the thoughts and visions vouchsafed them; that those who so devote themselves work unknown for a space and are not themselves aware of the profound import of their existence; and that only after they have passed from among

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us do we, the dull and the blind, begin to suspect that a great man dwelt in our midst and is now no more.

Nay, not no more, for "the idle singer of an empty day" has this advantage over the Thirty-Six, that he has left his songs to live for him. The echoes these awaken in our hearts, the impulses they arouse to new effort, the revealing magic of their medicinal music, are forms of his energizing spirit which are ever living. They abide and keep the world young by their urging power to newer expressions of Will; for only through the recurring springs may each year's harvests be garnered. Did we meet such Shelleys face to face, we should, in all probability, pass by with a contemptuous glance those queer-looking, ill-kempt, badly-clothed fellows, seeming somewhat like those strange beings we read of in the Bible who were wont to go about prophesying to the people. Yet may we be thankful that they "walk the earth unguessed at," untroubled by our overwhelming attentions, if they will but leave us "the precious life-blood" of their master-spirits in books. Our deepest gratitude, and our deepest life also, will be best expressed in the freer and fuller life of their fine friendship.

TEMPLE SCOTT

I

FRIENDS AT HOME

I

FRIENDS AT HOME





*WITH deathless minds which leave where they have
past
A path of light, my soul communion knew ;
Till from that glorious intercourse, at last,
As from a mine of magic store, I drew
Words which were weapons ; round my heart there grew
The adamantine armour of their power,
And from my fancy wings of golden hue
Sprang forth.*

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY
Revolt of Islam

To My Books on Parting with Them ∞ ∞ ∞

*AS one who, destined from his friends to part,
Regrets his loss, yet hopes again erewhile
To share their converse and enjoy their smile,
And tempers as he may affliction's dart, —
Thus, loved associates ! chiefs of elder Art !
Teachers of wisdom ! who could once beguile
My tedious hours, and lighten every toil,
I now resign you : nor with fainting heart ;
For pass a few short years, or days, or hours,
And happier seasons may their dawn unfold,
And all your sacred fellowship restore ;
When, freed from earth, unlimited its powers,
Mind shall with mind direct communion hold,
And kindred spirits meet to part no more.*

WILLIAM ROSCOE

The Friendship of Books

IN reading this book [the lost dialogue of *Hortensius* by Cicero] I felt myself become a new man. All the vain hopes I had pursued up to that time withdrew from my mind, and I experienced an incredible passion to consecrate myself to the search after wisdom and to conquer in that way immortality. I rose, Lord, to direct my steps toward Thee.

ST. AUGUSTINE
Confessions, III. 4

IN Books we find the dead, as it were, living; in Books we foresee things to come; in Books warlike affairs are methodized; the rights of peace proceed from Books. All things are corrupted and decay with time. Saturn never ceases to devour those whom he generates; inso-much that the glory of the world would be lost in oblivion if God had not provided mortals with a remedy in Books. Alexander the ruler of the world; Julius the invader of the world and of the city, the first who in unity of person assumed the empire in arms and arts; the faithful Fabricius, the rigid Cato, would at this day have been without a memorial if the aid of Books had failed them. Towers are razed to the earth, cities overthrown, triumphal arches mouldered to dust; nor can the King or Pope be found, upon whom the privilege of a lasting name can be conferred more easily than by Books. A Book made, renders succession to the author; for as long as the Book exists, the author remaining *ἀθάνατος*, immortal, cannot perish. . . .

The Friendship of Books

You only, O Books, are liberal and independent. You give to all who ask, and enfranchise all who serve you assiduously. . . . Truly you are the ears filled with most palatable grains. . . . You are golden urns in which manna is laid up, rocks flowing with honey, or rather indeed honeycombs; udders most copiously yielding the milk of life, storerooms ever full; the four-streamed river of Paradise, where the human mind is fed, and the arid intellect moistened and watered; . . . fruitful olives, vines of Engaddi, fig-trees knowing no sterility; burning lamps to be ever held in the hand.

The library, therefore, of wisdom is more precious than all riches, and nothing that can be wished for is worthy to be compared with it. Whosoever, therefore, acknowledges himself to be a zealous follower of truth, of happiness, of wisdom, of science, or even of the faith, must of necessity make himself a Lover of Books.

RICHARD DE BURY

Philobiblon, 1344. *Translation of* 1473

WHEN evening has arrived, I return home, and go into my study. . . . I pass into the antique courts of ancient men, where, welcomed lovingly by them, I feed upon the food which is my own, and for which I was born. Here, I can speak with them without show, and can ask of them the motives of their actions; and they respond to me by virtue of their humanity. For hours together, the miseries of life no longer annoy me; I forget every vexation; I do not fear poverty; and death itself does not dismay me, for I have altogether transferred myself to those with whom I hold converse.

NICCOLO MACHIAVELLI

Friends at Home

BUT I sit here with no company but books and some bright-faced friends upon the wall, musing upon things past and things to come; reading a little, falling off into a reverie, waking to look out on the ever charming beauty of the landscape, dipping again into some dainty honeycomb of literature, wandering from author to author, to catch the echoes which fly from book to book, and by silent suggestions or similarities connect the widely-separated men in time and nature closely together. All minds in the world's past history find their focal point in a library. This is that pinnacle from which we might see all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them. I keep Egypt and the Holy Land in the closet next the window. On this side of them is Athens and the empire of Rome. Never was such an army mustered as a library army. No general ever had such soldiers as I have. Let the military world call its roll, and I will call mine. The privates in my army would have made even the staff-officers of Alexander's army seem insignificant. Only think of a platoon of such good literary and philosophical yeomen as will answer my roll-call. "Plato!" "Here." A sturdy and noble soldier. "Aristotle!" "Here." A host in himself. Then I call Demosthenes, Cicero, Cæsar, Tacitus, Pliny; and of the famous Alexandrian school, Porphyry, Jamblicus, Plotinus, and others, all worthy fellows, every one of them, fully armed and equipped, and looking as fresh as if they had received the gift of youth and immortality. Modest men all; they never speak unless spoken to. Bountiful men all; they never refuse the asker. I have my doubts whether, if they were alive, I could keep the peace of my domains. But now they dwell together in unity, and

The Friendship of Books

all of the train in one company, and work for the world's good, each in his special way, but all contribute. I have also in a corner the numerous band of Christian Fathers, — Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Origen, Augustine, St. Ambrose, and others, with their opponents. They now lie peacefully together, without the shade of repugnance or anger. It is surprising how these men have changed. Not only are they here without quarrelling or disputing, without ambition or selfishness, but how calmly do they sit, though you pluck their opinions by the beard! Orthodox and heretic are now upon the most friendly terms. No kingdom ever had such illustrious subjects as mine, or was half as well governed. I can lead them forth to such wars as I choose, and not one of them is deaf to the trumpet. I hold all Egypt in fee simple. I can say as much of all the Orient, as he that was sent to grass did of Babylon. I build not a city, but empires, at a word. Praxiteles and Phidias look out of my window, while I am gone back to the Acropolis to see what they are about. The architects are building night and day, like them of old, without the sound of a hammer; my artists are painting, my designers are planning, my poets are chanting, my philosophers are discoursing, my historians are spinning their dry web, my theologians are weaving their yet finer ones. All the world is around me. All that ever stirred human hearts, or fired the imagination, is harmlessly here. My library shelves are the avenues of time. Cities and empires are put into a corner. Ages have wrought, generations grown, and all the blossoms are cast down here. It is the garden of immortal fruits, without dog or dragon.

GILBERT DE PORRÉ, *Letters*.

Friends at Home

HERE is the best solitary company in the world, and in this particular chiefly excelling any other, that in my study I am sure to converse with none but wise men; but abroad it is impossible for me to avoid the society of fools. What an advantage have I, by this good fellowship, that, besides the help which I receive from hence, in reference to my life after this life, I can enjoy the life of so many ages before I lived! — that I can be acquainted with the passages of three or four thousand years ago, as if they were the weekly occurrences! Here, without travelling so far as Endor, I can call up the ablest spirits of those times, the learnedest philosophers, the wisest counsellors, the greatest generals, and make them serviceable to me. I can make bold with the best jewels they have in their treasury, with the same freedom that the Israelites borrowed of the Egyptians, and, without suspicion of felony, make use of them as mine own. I can here, without trespassing, go into their vineyards and not only eat my fill of their grapes for my pleasure, but put up as much as I will in my vessel, and store it up for my profit and advantage. . . .

SIR WILLIAM WALLER

Divine Meditations: Meditation upon the Contentment I have in my Books and Study.

WOULD a writer know how to behave himself with relation to posterity, let him consider in old books what he finds that he is glad to know, and what omissions he most laments.

The Friendship of Books

When I am reading a book, whether wise or silly, it seems to be alive and talking to me.

JONATHAN SWIFT

Thoughts on Various Subjects

I ARMED her against the censure of the world, showed her that books were sweet unrepublishing companions to the miserable, and that, if they could not bring us to enjoy life, they would at least teach us to endure it.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH

The Vicar of Wakefield, Ch. XXII

NOW, all amid the rigours of the year,
In the wild depth of winter, while without
The ceaseless winds blow ice, be my retreat
Between the groaning forest and the shore,
Beat by the boundless multitude of waves;
A rural, sheltered, solitary scene;
Where ruddy fire and beaming tapers join
To cheer the gloom. There studious let me sit,
And hold high converse with the mighty dead;
Sages of ancient time, as gods revered,
As gods beneficent, who bless'd mankind
With arts, with arms, and humanized a world.
Roused at th' inspiring thought, I throw aside
The long-lived volume; and, deep musing, hail
The sacred shades, that, slowly rising, pass
Before my wond'ring eye.

JAMES THOMSON

The Seasons: Winter

BUT now the supper crowns their simple board,
The halesome parritch, chief of Scotia's food;

Friends at Home

The sowp their only hawkie does afford,
That, yont the hallan snugly chows her cood :
The dame brings forth, in complimental mood,
To grace the lad, her weel-hain'd kebbuck, fell ;
And aft he's prest, and aft he ca's it guid :
The frugal wifie, garrulous, will tell
How 'twas a towmond auld, sin' lint was i' the bell.

The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,
They, round the ingle, form a circle wide ;
The sire turns o'er, with patriarchal grace,
The big ha-bible, ance his father's pride :
His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,
His lyart haffets wearing thin and bare ;
Those strains that once did sweet Zion glide,
He wales a portion with judicious care ;
And 'Let us worship God !' he says with solemn air.

ROBERT BURNS

The Cotter's Saturday Night

WIE anders tragen uns die Geistesfreunden,
Von Buch zu Buch, von Blatt zu Blatt !
Da werden Winter-Nächte hold und schön ;
Ein selig Leben warmet alle Glieder ;
Und, Ach ! entrollst du gar ein würdig Pergamen,
So steigt der ganze Himmel zu dir nieder.

GOETHE, *Faust*

HOW otherwise do the friends of the soul bear us from
book to book, from page to page !
Then the nights of winter become gracious and beautiful,
A joyous life warms every limb.

The Friendship of Books

And oh ! when you unroll a precious parchment
Then does the whole heaven step down to you.

Translation

BUT what stranger art, what magic can dispose
The troubled mind to change its native woes ?
Or lead us willing from ourselves, to see
Others more wretched, more undone than we ?
This, BOOKS can do, — nor this alone ; they give
New views to life, and teach us how to live ;
They soothe the grieved, the stubborn they chastise,
Fools they admonish, and confirm the wise ;
Their aid they yield to all ; they never shun
The man of sorrow, nor the wretch undone ;
Unlike the hard, the selfish, and the proud,
They fly not sullen from the suppliant crowd ;
Nor tell to various people various things,
But show to subjects, what they show to kings.

Come, Child of Care ! to make thy soul serene,
Approach the treasures of this tranquil scene ;
Survey the dome, and, as the doors unfold,
The soul's best cure, in all her cares, behold !
Where mental wealth the poor in thought may find
And mental physic the diseased in mind ;
See here the balms that passion's wounds assuage ;
See coolers here, that damp the fire of rage ;
Here alt'ratives, by slow degrees control
The chronic habits of the sickly soul ;
And round the heart and o'er the aching head,
Wild opiates here their sober influence shed.
Now bid thy soul man's busy scenes exclude,
And view composed this silent multitude :

Friends at Home

Silent they are — but, though deprived of sound —
Here all the living languages abound ;
Here all that live no more; preserved they lie,
In tombs that open to the curious eye.

Blest be the gracious Power, who taught mankind
To stamp a lasting image of the mind !
Beasts may convey, and tuneful birds may sing,
Their mutual feelings, in the opening spring ;
But Man alone has skill and power to send
The heart's warm dictates to the distant friend ;
'Tis his alone to please, instruct, advise
Ages remote, and nations yet to rise.

GEORGE CRABBE

The Library

O ANDREW ! Although our learning raiseth up
against us many enemies, among the low, and more
among the powerful, yet doth it invest us with grand and
glorious privileges, and grant to us a largess of beatitude.
We enter our studies, and enjoy a society which we alone
can bring together. We raise no jealousy by conversing
with one in preference to another ; we give no offence to
the most illustrious by questioning him as long as we will,
and leaving him as abruptly. Diversity of opinion raises
no tumult in our presence ; each interlocutor stands
before us, speaks, or is silent, and we adjourn or decide the
business at our leisure. Nothing is past which we desire
to be present ; and we enjoy by anticipation somewhat
like the power which I imagine we shall possess hereafter
of sailing on a wish from world to world.

W. S. LANDOR

Imaginary Conversations. Milton and Marvell

The Friendship of Books

WHAT a place to be in is an old library ! It seems as though all the souls of all the writers, that have bequeathed their labors to these Bodleians, were reposing here, as in some dormitory, or middle state. I do not want to handle, to profane the leaves, their winding sheets. I could as soon dislodge a shade. I seem to inhale learning, walking amid their foliage ; and the odor of their old moth-scented coverings is fragrant as the first bloom of those scintial apples which grew amid the happy orchard.

CHARLES LAMB

Essays of Elia: Oxford in the Vacation

“ I WISH the good old times would come again, when we were not quite so rich. I do not mean that I want to be poor ; but there was a middle state ; ” so she was pleased to ramble on, — “ in which I am sure we were a great deal happier. A purchase is but a purchase, now that you have money enough and to spare. Formerly it used to be a triumph. When we coveted a cheap luxury (and, O ! how much ado I had to get you to consent in those times !) we were used to have a debate two or three days before, and to weigh the For and Against, and think what we might spare it out of, and what saving we could hit upon, that should be an equivalent. A thing was worth buying then, when we felt the money that we paid for it.

“ Do you remember the brown suit, which you made to hang upon you, till all your friends cried shame upon you, it grew so thread-bare — and all because of that folio Beaumont and Fletcher, which you dragged home late at night from Barker’s in Covent Garden ? Do you

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remember how we eyed it for weeks before we could make up our minds to the purchase, and had not come to a determination till it was near ten o'clock of the Saturday night, when you set off from Islington, fearing you should be too late — and when the old bookseller with some grumbling opened his shop, and by the twinkling taper (for he was setting bedwards) lighted out the relic from his dusty treasures — and when you lugged it home, wishing it were twice as cumbersome — and when you presented it to me — and when we were exploring the perfectness of it (collating you called it) — and while I was repairing some of the loose leaves with paste, which your impatience would not suffer to be left till day-break — was there no pleasure in being a poor man? or can those neat black clothes which you wear now, and are so careful to keep brushed, since we have become rich and finical, give you half the honest vanity, with which you flaunted it about in that over-worn suit — your old corbeau — for four or five weeks longer than you should have done, to pacify your conscience for the mighty sum of fifteen — or sixteen shillings was it? — a great affair we thought it then — which you had lavished on the old folio? Now you can afford to buy any book that pleases you, but I do not see that you ever bring me home any nice old purchases now."

CHARLES LAMB

Essays of Elia : Old China

IT is impossible to enter a large library, especially when in appearance so antique as the one of which we are now writing, without feeling an inward sensation of reverence, and without catching some sparks of noble

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emulation, from the mass of mind which is scattered around you. The very dullest, and least intellectual of the sons of earth, must be conscious of the high and lofty society into which he is intruding; a society which no combination of living talent can ever hope to parallel. . . . We feel, as we reverence the mighty spirits around us, that we are in some sort their brothers; and the very homage which we pay to their majesty is itself the bond of our alliance. . . .

The works around us naturally bring their authors before our eye. We can see Hooker in his quiet country parsonage, beholding "God's blessings spring out of his mother earth, and eating his own bread in peace and privacy." We can see Sidney amongst the shades of Penshurst writing on poetry, with all the enthusiasm of a poet, and proving, that "poesie is full of virtue, breeding delightfulness, and void of no gift that ought to be in the noble name of learning." We can see Bacon in his closet, conceiving in his mighty mind the greatest birth of time, and unbent by misfortune, and undejected by disgrace, illuminating philosophy "with all the weight of matter, worthy of subject, soundness of argument, life of invention, and depth of judgment." We can see Selden amidst bulls, breviats, antiphoners, and monkish manuscripts, laying up the stores of his vast learning, and awaiting from posterity the rewards which were denied him by a prejudiced clergy. We can be present with Burton, whilst enjoying the delights of voluntary solitariness, and walking alone in some grove, betwixt wood and water, by a brook side, to meditate upon some delightful and pleasant subject, and hear him declaring in ecstasy, "what an incomparable delight it is so to melan-

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cholize and build castles in the air." At last, though second to none of his contemporaries, we can be witness to the lonely musings of him, "who untamed in war, and indefatigable in literature, as inexhaustible in ideas as exploits, after having brought a new world to light, wrote the history of the old in a prison."

JAMES CROSSLEY

The Chetham Library: Blackwood's Magazine, 1821

On Reading Old Books ∞ ∞ ∞ ∞ ∞

I HATE to read new books. There are twenty or thirty volumes that I have read over and over again, and these are the only ones that I have any desire ever to read at all. It was a long time before I could bring myself to sit down to the *Tales of My Landlord*, but now that author's works have made a considerable addition to my scanty library. I am told that some of Lady Morgan's are good, and have been recommended to look into Anastasius; but I have not yet ventured upon that task. A lady, the other day, could not refrain from expressing her surprise to a friend, who said he had been reading *Delphine*: — she asked, — If it had not been published some time back? Women judge of books as they do of fashions or complexions, which are admired only 'in their newest gloss.' That is not my way. I am not one of those who trouble the circulating libraries much, or pester the booksellers for mail-coach copies of standard periodical publications. I cannot say that I am greatly addicted to black-letter, but I profess myself well versed in the marble bindings of Andrew Millar, in the middle of the last century; nor does my task revolt at Thurloe's State

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Papers, in Russia leather; or an ample impression of Sir William Temple's Essays, with a portrait after Sir Godfrey Kneller in front. I do not think altogether the worse of a book for having survived the author a generation or two. I have more confidence in the dead than the living. Contemporary writers may generally be divided into two classes — one's friends or one's foes. Of the first we are compelled to think too well, and of the last we are disposed to think too ill, to receive much genuine pleasure from the perusal, or to judge fairly of the merits of either. One candidate for literary fame, who happens to be of our acquaintance, writes finely, and like a man of genius; but unfortunately has a foolish face, which spoils a delicate passage: — another inspires us with the highest respect for his personal talents and character, but does not quite come up to our expectations in print. All these contradictions and petty details interrupt the calm current of our reflections. If you want to know what any of the authors were who lived before our time, and are still objects of anxious inquiry, you have only to look into their works. But the dust and smoke and noise of modern literature have nothing in common with the pure, silent air of immortality.

When I take up a work that I have read before (the oftener the better), I know what I have to expect. The satisfaction is not lessened by being anticipated. When the entertainment is altogether new, I sit down to it as I should to a strange dish, — turn and pick out a bit here and there, and am in doubt what to think of the composition. There is a want of confidence and security to second appetite. New-fangled books are also like made-dishes in this respect, that they are generally little else

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than hashes and *rifaccimentos* of what has been served up entire and in a more natural state at other times. Besides, in thus turning to a well-known author, there is not only an assurance that my time will not be thrown away, or my palate nauseated with the most insipid or vilest trash, — but I shake hands with, and look an old, tried, and valued friend in the face, — and compare notes, and chat the hours away. It is true, we form dear friendships with such ideal guests — dearer, alas! and more lasting, than those with our most intimate acquaintance. In reading a book which is an old favorite with me (say the first novel I ever read) I not only have the pleasure of imagination and of a critical relish of the work, but the pleasures of memory added to it. It recalls the same feelings and associations which I had in first reading it, and which I can never have again in any other way. Standard productions of this kind are links in the chain of our conscious being. They bind together the different scattered divisions of our personal identity. They are landmarks and guides in our journey through life. They are pegs and loops on which we can hang up, or from which we can take down, at pleasure, the wardrobe of a moral imagination, the relics of our best affections, the tokens and records of our happiest hours. They are ‘for thoughts and for remembrance!’ They are like Fortunatus’s Wishing-Cap — they give us the best riches — those of Fancy; and transport us, not over half the globe, but (which is better) over half our lives, at a word’s notice!

My father Shandy solaced himself with *Bruscambille*. Give me for this purpose a volume of *Peregrine Pickle* or *Tom Jones*. Open either of them anywhere — at the

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Memoirs of Lady Vane, or the adventures at the masquerade with Lady Bellaston, or the disputes between Thwackum and Square, or the escape of Molly Seagrim, or the incident of Sophia and her muff, or the edifying prolixity of her aunt's lecture — and there I find the same delightful, busy, bustling scene as ever, and feel myself the same as when I was first introduced into the midst of it. Nay, sometimes the sight of an odd volume of these good old English authors on a stall, or the name lettered on the back among others on the shelves of a library, answers the purpose, revives the whole train of ideas, and sets 'the puppets dallying.' Twenty years are struck off the list, and I am a child again. A sage philosopher, who was not a very wise man, said, that he should like very well to be young again, if he could take his experience along with him. This ingenious person did not seem to be aware, by the gravity of his remark, that the great advantage of being young is to be without this weight of experience, which he would fain place upon the shoulders of youth, and which never comes too late with years. Oh! what a privilege to be able to let this hump, like Christian's burthen, drop from off one's back, and transport one's self, by the help of a little musty duodecimo, to the time when 'ignorance was bliss,' and when we first got a peep at the raree-show of the world, through the glass of fiction — gazing at mankind, as we do at wild beasts in a menagerie, through the bars of their cages, — or at curiosities in a museum, that we must not touch! For myself, not only are the old ideas of the contents of the work brought back to my mind in all their vividness, but the old associations of the faces and persons of those I then knew, as they

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were in their life-time — the place where I sat to read the volume, the day when I got it, the feeling of the air, the fields, the sky return, and all my early impressions with them. This is better to me — those places, those times, those persons, and those feelings that come across me as I retrace the story and devour the page, are to me better far than the wet sheets of the last new novel from the Ballantyne press, to say nothing of the Minerva press in Leadenhall-street. It is like visiting the scenes of early youth. I think of the time ‘when I was in my father’s house, and my path ran down with butter and honey,’ — when I was a little, thoughtless child, and had no other wish or care but to con my daily task, and be happy! — Tom Jones, I remember, was the first work that broke the spell. It came down in numbers once a fortnight, in Cooke’s pocket-edition, embellished with cuts. I had hitherto read only in school-books, and a tiresome ecclesiastical history (with the exception of Mrs. Radcliffe’s Romance of the Forest): but this had a different relish with it, — ‘sweet in the mouth,’ though not ‘bitter in the belly.’ It smacked of the world I lived in, and in which I was to live — and shewed me groups, ‘gay creatures’ not ‘of the element,’ but of the earth; not ‘living in the clouds,’ but travelling the same road that I did; — some that had passed on before me, and others that might soon overtake me. My heart had palpitated at the thoughts of a boarding-school ball, or gala-day at Midsummer or Christmas: but the world I had found out in Cooke’s edition of the British Novelists was to me a dance through life, a perpetual gala-day. The six-penny numbers of this work regularly contrived to leave off just in the middle of a sentence, and in the

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nick of a story, where Tom Jones discovers Square behind the blanket; or where Parson Adams, in the inextricable confusion of events, very undesignedly gets to bed to Mrs. Slip-slop. Let me caution the reader against this impression of Joseph Andrews; for there is a picture of Fanny in it which he should not set his heart on, lest he should never meet with any thing like it; or if he should, it would, perhaps, be better for him that he had not. It was just like ——! With what eagerness I used to look forward to the next number, and open the prints! Ah! never again shall I feel the enthusiastic delight with which I gazed at the figures, and anticipated the story and adventures of Major Bath and Commodore Trunnion, of Trim and my uncle Toby, of Don Quixote and Sancho and Dapple, of Gil Blas and Dame Lorenza Sephora, of Laura and the fair Lucretia, whose lips open and shut like buds of roses. To what nameless ideas did they give rise, — with what airy delights I filled up the outlines, as I hung in silence over the page! — Let me still recall them, that they may breathe fresh life into me, and that I may live that birthday of thought and romantic pleasure over again! Talk of the ideal! This is the only true ideal — the heavenly tints of Fancy reflected in the bubbles that floated upon the spring-tide of human life.

Oh! Memory! shield me from the world's poor strife,
And give those scenes thine everlasting life!

WILLIAM HAZLITT

The Plain Speaker: On Reading Old Books

SITTING last winter among my books, and walled round with all the comfort and protection which they and my fire-side could afford me, — to wit, a table of high-piled

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books at my back, my writing desk on one side of me, some shelves on the other, and the feeling of the warm fire at my feet, — I began to consider how I loved the authors of those books; how I loved them too, not only for the imaginative pleasures they afforded me, but for their making me love the very books themselves, and delight to be in contact with them. I looked sideways at my Spenser, my Theocritus, and my Arabian Nights; then above them at my Italian Poets; then behind me at my Dryden and Pope, my Romances, and my Boccaccio; then on my left side at my Chaucer, who lay on my writing desk; and thought how natural it was in Charles Lamb to give a kiss to an old folio, as I once saw him do to Chapman's Homer. . . .

I entrench myself in my books, equally against sorrow and the weather. If the wind comes through a passage, I look about to see how I can fence it off by a better disposition of my moveables; if a melancholy thought is importunate, I give another glance at my Spenser. When I speak of being in contact with my books, I mean it literally. I like to be able to lean my head against them. . . .

I like a great library next my study; but for the study itself, give me a small snug place almost entirely walled with books. There should be only one window in it, looking upon trees. Some prefer a place with few or no books at all; nothing but a chair or a table, like Epicurus: but I should say that these were philosophers, not lovers of books, if I did not recollect that Montaigne was both. He had a study in a round tower walled, as aforesaid. It is true, one forgets one's books while writing: at least they say so. For my part, I think I have them in a sort of sidealong mind's eye; like a second

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thought, which is none; like a waterfall, or a whispering wind. . . .

The very perusal of the backs is a "discipline of humanity." There Mr. Southey takes his place again with an old Radical friend: there Jeremy Collier is at peace with Dryden; there the lion, Martin Luther, lies down with the Quaker lamb, Sewell: there Guzman d'Alfarache thinks himself fit company for Sir Charles Grandison, and has his claims admitted. Even the "high fantastical" Duchess of Newcastle, with her laurel on her head, is received with grave honors, and not the less for declining to trouble herself with the constitution of her maids. . . .

How pleasant it is to reflect that the greatest lovers of books have themselves become books! What better metamorphosis could Pythagoras have desired! How Ovid and Horace exulted in anticipating theirs! And how the world have justified their exultation! They had a right to triumph over brass and marble. It is the only visible change which changes no further; which generates, and yet is not destroyed. Consider: mines themselves are exhausted; cities perish; kingdoms are swept away, and man weeps with indignation to think that his own body is not immortal. . . .

Yet this little body of thought that lies before me in the shape of a book has existed thousands of years; nor since the invention of the press can anything short of an universal convulsion of nature abolish it. To a shape like this, so small, yet so comprehensive, so slight, yet so lasting, so insignificant, yet so venerable, turns the mighty activity of Homer, and so turning, is enabled to live and warm us forever. To a shape like this turns the placid sage of Academus: to a shape like this the

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grandeur of Milton, the exuberance of Spenser, the pungent elegance of Pope, and the volatility of Prior. In one small room, like the compressed spirits of Milton, can be gathered together

The assembled souls of all that men held wise.

May I hope to become the meanest of these existences ! This is a question which every author, who is a lover of books, asks himself some time in his life ! and which must be pardoned, because it cannot be helped. I know not. I cannot exclaim with the poet,

Oh that my name were numbered among theirs,
Then gladly would I end my mortal days.

For my mortal days, few and feeble as the rest of them may be, are of consequence to others. But I should like to remain visible in this shape. The little of myself that pleases myself, I could wish to be accounted worth pleasing others. I should like to survive so, were it only for the sake of those who love me in private, knowing as I do what a treasure is the possession of a friend's mind, when he is no more. At all events, nothing, while I live and think, can deprive me of my value for such treasures. I can help the appreciation of them while I last, and love them till I die ; and perhaps, if fortune turns her face once more in kindness upon me before I go, I may chance, some quiet day, to lay my over-beating temples on a book, and so have the death I most envy.

LEIGH HUNT

The Literary Examiner: My Books

ALL round the room my silent servants wait, —
My friends in every season, bright and dim
Angels and seraphim

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Come down and murmur to me, sweet and low,
And spirits of the skies all come and go
Early and late;
From the old world's divine and distant date,
From the sublimer few,
Down to the poet who but yester-eve
Sang sweet and made us grieve,
All come, assembling here in order due.
And here I dwell with Poesy, my mate,
With Erato and all her vernal sighs,
Great Clio with her victories elate,
Or pale Urania's deep and starry eyes.
Of friends, whom chance and change can never harm,
Whom Death the tyrant cannot doom to die,
Within whose folding soft eternal charm
I love to lie,
And meditate upon your verse that flows,
And fertilizes wheresoe'er it goes.

BRYAN WALLER PROCTER (Barry Cornwall)
(Fragment)

THE scholar only knows how dear these silent, yet eloquent, companions of pure thoughts and innocent hours become in the season of adversity. When all that is worldly turns to dross around us, these only retain their steady value. When friends grow cold, and the converse of intimates languishes into vapid civility and common-place, these only continue the unaltered countenance of happier days, and cheer us with that true friendship which never deceived hope nor deserted sorrow.

WASHINGTON IRVING
The Sketch Book

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AND in a corner of my house I have *books* — the miracle of all my possessions, more wonderful than the wishing-cap of the Arabian tales, for they transport me instantly, not only to all places, but to all times. By my books I can conjure up before me to a momentary existence many of the great and good men of past ages, and for my individual satisfaction they seem to act again the most renowned of their achievements; the orators declaim for me, the historians recite, the poets sing.

DR. ARNOTT

The Elements of Physics

GOOD books, like good friends, are few and chosen; the more select the more enjoyable; and like these are approached with diffidence, nor sought too familiarly nor too often, having the precedence only when friends tire. The most mannerly of companions, accessible at all times, in all moods, they frankly declare the author's mind, without giving offence. Like living friends they too have their voice and physiognomies, and their company is prized as old acquaintances. We seek them in our need of counsel or of amusement, without impertinence or apology, sure of having our claims allowed. A good book justifies our theory of personal supremacy, keeping this fresh in the memory and perennial. What were days without such fellowship? We were alone in the world without it. Nor does our faith falter though the secret we search for and do not find in them will not commit itself to literature, still we take up the new issue with the old expectation, and again and again, as we try our friends after many failures at conversation, believing this visit will

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be the favored hour and all will be told us. Nor do I know what book I can well spare, certainly none that has admitted me, though it be but for the moment and by the most oblique glimpse, into the mind and personality of its author; though few there are that prefer such friendly claim to one's regard, and satisfy expectation as he turns their leaves. Our favorites are few; since only what rises from the heart reaches it, being caught and carried on the tongues of men wheresoever love and letters journey.

Nor need we wonder at their scarcity or the value we set upon them; life, the essence of good letters as of friendship, being its own best biographer, the artist that portrays the persons and thoughts we are, and are becoming. And the most that even he can do, is but a chance stroke or two at this fine essence housed in the handsome dust, but too fugitive and coy to be caught and held fast for longer than the passing glance; the master touching and ever retouching the picture he leaves unfinished.

My life has been the poem I would have writ,
But I could not both live and utter it.

. . . Any library is an attraction. And there is an indescribable delight—who has not felt it that deserves the name of scholar—in mousing at choice among the alcoves of antique book-shops especially, and finding the oldest of these sometimes newest of the new, fresher, more suggestive than the book just published and praised in the reviews. And the pleasure scarcely less of cutting the leaves of the new volume, opening by preference at the end rather than title-page, and seizing the author's conclusion at a glance. Very few books repay the reading in course.

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Nor can we excuse an author if his page does not tempt us to copy passages into our commonplaces, for quotation, proverbs, meditation, or other uses. A good book is fruitful of other books; it perpetuates its fame from age to age, and makes eras in the lives of its readers.

Next to a friend's discourse, no morsel is more delicious than a ripe book, a book whose flavor is as refreshing at the thousandth tasting as at the first. Books when friends weary, conversation flags, or nature fails to inspire. (The best books appeal to the deepest in us and answer the demand.) A book loses if wanting the personal element, gains when this is insinuated, or comes to the front occasionally, blending history with mythology.

My favorite books have a personality and complexion as distinctly drawn as if the author's portrait were framed into the paragraphs and smiled upon me as I read his illustrated pages. Nor could I spare them from my table or shelves, though I should not open the leaves for a twelve-month; — the sight of them, the knowledge that they are within reach, accessible at any moment, rewards me when I invite their company. Borrowed books are not mine while in hand. I covet ownership in the contents, and fancy that he who is conversant with these is the rightful owner, and moreover, that the true scholar owes to scholars a catalogue of his chosen volumes, that they may learn from whence his entertainment during leisure moments. Next to a personal introduction, a list of one's favorite authors were the best admittance to his character and manners. . . .

A. BRONSON ALCOTT

Tablets: Books

The Friendship of Books

BUT it is not less true that there are books which are of that importance in a man's private experience as to verify for him the fables of Cornelius Agrippa, of Michael Scott, or of the old Orpheus of Thrace, — books which take rank in our life with parents and lovers and passionate experiences, so medicinal, so stringent, so revolutionary, so authoritative, — books which are the work and the proof of faculties so comprehensive, so nearly equal to the world which they paint, that though one shuts them with meaner ones, he feels his exclusion from them to accuse his way of living.

Consider what you have in the smallest chosen library. A company of the wisest and wittiest men that could be picked out of all civil countries in a thousand years have set in best order the results of their learning and wisdom. The men themselves were hid and inaccessible, solitary, impatient of interruption, fenced by etiquette; but the thought which they did not uncover to their bosom friend is here written out in transparent words to us, the strangers of another age.

We owe to books those general benefits which come from high intellectual action. Thus, I think, we often owe to them the perception of immortality. They impart sympathetic activity to the moral power. Go with mean people and you think life is mean. Then read Plutarch, and the world is a proud place, peopled with men of positive quality, with heroes and demigods standing around us, who will not let us sleep. Then, they address the imagination: only poetry inspires poetry. They become the organic culture of the time. College education is the reading of certain books which the common sense of all scholars agrees will represent the science already

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accumulated. If you know that, — for instance in geometry, if you have read Euclid and Laplace, — your opinion has some value ; if you do not know these, you are not entitled to give any opinion on the subject. Whenever any sceptic or bigot claims to be heard on the questions of intellect and morals, we ask if he is familiar with the books of Plato, where all his pert objections have once for all been disposed of. If not, he has no right to our time. Let him go and find himself answered there.

R. W. EMERSON

Society and Solitude: Books

The Library ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

“LET there be Light !” God spake of old,
And over chaos dark and cold,
And through the dead and formless frame
Of nature, life and order came.

Faint was the light at first that shone
On giant fern and mastodon,
On half-formed plant and beast of prey,
And man as rude and wild as they.

Age after age, like waves o’erran
The earth, uplifting brute and man ;
And mind, at length, in symbols dark
Its meanings traced on stone and bark.

On leaf of palm, on sedge-wrought roll,
On plastic clay and leathern scroll,
Man wrote his thoughts ; the ages passed,
And lo ! the Press was found at last !

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Then dead souls woke; the thoughts of men
Whose bones were dust revived again;
The cloister's silence found a tongue.
Old prophets spake, old poets sung.

And here, to-day, the dead look down,
The kings of mind again we crown;
We hear the voices lost so long,
The sage's word, the sibyl's song.

Here Greek and Roman find themselves
Alive along these crowded shelves;
And Shakespere treads again his stage,
And Chaucer paints anew his age.

As if some Pantheon's marbles broke
Their stony trance, and lived and spoke,
Life thrills along the alcov'd hall,
The lords of thought awake our call.

J. G. WHITTIER

BOOKS themselves, after long companionship, come to have an actual personality for many of us. They are to me "a substantial world," in more senses than Wordsworth's. The material tangible volume becomes a personal friend, — like the familiar walking-stick, or well-accustomed pipe. The very leather and lettering form themselves into a countenance — sometimes quite as expressive as some of those which belong to our human flesh-and-blood companions. . . . Let me confess that I have a distinct affection for my books wholly independent of any literary gratification to be derived from

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them. Some of those which I could least bear to part with are books which I never have read, and know that I never shall read, in the flesh. Just as one can sit in silence with an old and intimate friend, or walk by his side with a quiet satisfaction, without caring to be continually chattering, and the feeling of companionship is none the less real because each is pursuing at the moment his own separate line of thought; — so it is with some of the occupants of my study-shelves. I look lovingly at their honest faces (I have already said that a book's face lies in its back), wearing the same familiar aspect that they have worn for years; I know that there is good stuff there within, should I ever have occasion for its use, and am perfectly content with this kind of inheritance in *posse*. Good heavens! how many dear old friends have we all, from whom a three days' visit would be utterly insupportable, if they were bound to give utterance, and we to listen, during all that time, to all that is in their excellent hearts; or if we were bound to keep them incessantly in conversation! And what a thinning there would be both of books and booksellers, if no one was allowed to possess or hire a book which he did not mean to read!

So it becomes an increasing delight to me, the lazier I grow in the matter of actual reading, to sit in my arm-chair in the little room which is called my "Study," and look round at the faces (miscalled the backs) of my old friends who are ranged round its four walls.

Blackwood's Magazine: The Companionship of Books

BOOKS to me, that is those of our best writers, are ever new; the books may be the same, but *I* am changed. Every seven years gives me a different, often a higher,

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appreciation of those I like. Every *good* book is worth reading three times at least.

CHARLES BRAY

*Phases of Opinion and Experience during
a Long Life. An Autobiography*

OH! but books are such safe company! They keep your secrets well; *they* never boast that they made your eyes glisten, or your cheeks flush, or your heart throb. You may take up your favorite author, and love him at a distance just as warmly as you like, for all the sweet fancies and glowing thoughts that have winged your lonely hours so fleetly and so sweetly. Then you may close the book, and lean your cheek against the cover, as if it were the face of a dear friend; shut your eyes and soliloquize to your heart's content, without fear of misconstruction, even though you should exclaim in the fulness of your enthusiasm, "What an *adorable soul that man has!*" You may put the volume under your pillow, and let your eye and the first ray of morning light fall on it together, and nothing shall rob you of that delicious pleasure. You may have a thousand petty, provoking, irritating annoyances through the day, and you shall come back again to your dear old book, and forget them all in dream-land. It shall be a friend that shall be always at hand; that shall never try you by caprice, or pain you by forgetfulness, or wound you by distrust.

SARA P. PARTON (Fanny Fern)

Fern Leaves

MARK, there, We get no good
By being ungenerous, even to a book,
And calculating profits, — so much help

Friends at Home

By so much reading. It is rather when
We gloriously forget ourselves and plunge
Soul-forward, headlong, into a book's profound,
Impassioned for its beauty and salt of truth —
'Tis then we get the right good from a book.

.
Books, books, books !

I had found the secret of a garret-room
Piled high with cases in my father's name,
Piled high, packed large, — where, creeping in and out
Among the giant fossils of my past,
Like some small nimble mouse between the ribs
Of a mastodon, I nibbled here and there
At this or that box, pulling through the gap,
In heats of terror, haste, victorious joy,
The first book first. And how I felt it best
Under my pillow, in the morning's dark,
An hour before the sun would let me read !
My books ! At last because the time was ripe,
I chanced upon the poets.

E. B. BROWNING
Aurora Leigh

SADLY as some old mediæval knight
Gazed at the arms he could no longer wield,
The sword two-handed and the shining shield
Suspended in the hall, and full in sight,
While secret longings for the lost delight
Of tourney or adventure in the field
Came over him, and tears but half concealed
Trembled and fell upon his beard of white,
So I behold these books upon their shelf,

The Friendship of Books

My ornaments and arms of other days ;
Not wholly useless, though no longer used,
For they remind me of my other self,
Younger and stronger, and the pleasant ways,
In which I walked, now clouded and confused.

H. W. LONGFELLOW

To my Books



SILENT companions of the lonely hour,
Friends, who can never alter or forsake,
Who for inconstant roving have no power,
And all neglect, perforce, must calmly take,
Let me return to *you* ; this turmoil ending
Which worldly cares have in my spirit wrought,
And, o'er your old familiar pages bending,
Refresh my mind with many a tranquil thought :
Till, happily meeting there, from time to time,
Fancies, the audible echo of my own,
'Twill be like hearing in a foreign clime
My native language spoke in friendly tone,
And with a sort of welcome I shall dwell
On these, my unripe musings, told so well.

MRS. C. NORTON

HOW oft, at evening, when the mind, o'erwrought,
Finds, in dim reverie, repose from thought,
Just at that hour when soft subsiding day
Slants on the glimmering shelves its latest ray ;
Along those darkling files I ponder slow,
And muse, how vast the debt to books we owe.

Yes ! friends they are ! and friends thro' life to last !

Friends at Home

Hopes for the future ! memories for the past !
With them, no fear of leisure unemployed ;
Let come the leisure, they shall fill the void :
With them, no dread of joys that fade from view ;
They stand beside us, and our youth renew ;
Telling fond tales of that exalted time,
When lore was bliss, and power was in its prime.
Come then, delicious converse still to hold,
And still to teach, ye long-loved volumes old !

And sweet 'twill be, or hope would so believe,
When close round life its fading tints of eve,
To turn again our earlier volumes o'er,
And love them then, because we've loved before ;
And inly bless the waning hour that brings
A will to lean once more on simple things.

JOHN KENYON
Poems

IN my garden I spend my days ; in my library I spend my nights. My interests are divided between my geraniums and my books. With the flower I am in the present ; with the book I am in the past. I go into my library, and all history unrolls before me. I breathe the morning air of the world while the scent of Eden's roses yet lingered in it, while it vibrated only to the world's first brood of nightingales, and to the laugh of Eve. I see the Pyramids building ; I hear the shoutings of the armies of Alexander ; I feel the ground shake beneath the march of Cambyeses. I sit as in a theatre, — the stage is time, the play is the play of the world. What a spectacle it is ! What kingly pomp, what processions file past, what cities

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burn to heaven, what crowds of captives are dragged at the chariot-wheels of conquerors ! I hiss, or cry "Bravo," when the great actors come on the shaking stage. I am a Roman emperor when I look at a Roman coin. I lift Homer, and I shout with Achilles in the trenches. The silence of the unpeopled Syrian plains, the out-comings and in-goings of the patriarchs, Abraham and Ishmael, Isaac in the fields at eventide, Rebekah at the well, Jacob's guile, Esau's face reddened by desert sun-heat, Joseph's splendid funeral procession, — all these things I find within the boards of my Old Testament. What a silence in those old books as of a half-peopled world ; what bleating of flocks ; what green pastoral rest ; what indubitable human existence ! Across brawling centuries of blood and war I hear the bleating of Abraham's flocks, the tinkling of the bells of Rebekah's camels. O men and women so far separated yet so near, so strange yet so well-known, by what miraculous power do I know ye all ! Books are the true Elysian fields, where the spirits of the dead converse ; and into these fields a mortal may venture unappalled. What king's court can boast such company ? What school of philosophy such wisdom ? The wit of the ancient world is glancing and flashing there. There is Pan's pipe, there are the songs of Apollo. Seated in my library at night, and looking on the silent faces of my books, I am occasionally visited by a strange sense of the supernatural. They are not collections of printed pages, they are ghosts. I take one down, and it speaks with me in a tongue not now heard on earth, and of men and things of which it alone possesses knowledge. I call myself a solitary, but sometimes I think I misapply the term. No man sees more company than I do. I travel with

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mightier cohorts around me than ever did Timour or Genghis Khan on their fiery marches. I am a sovereign in my library, but it is the dead, not the living, that attend my levees.

ALEXANDER SMITH

Dreamthorp: Books and Gardens

The Library ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

HERE, e'en the sturdy democrat may find
Nor scorn their rank, the nobles of the mind;
While kings may learn, nor blush at being shown,
How Learning's patents abrogate their own.
A goodly company and fair to see:
Royal plebeians; earls of low degree;
Beggars whose wealth enriches every clime;
Princes who scarce can boast a mental dime,
Crowd here together, like the quaint array
Of jostling neighbors on a market day:
Homer and Milton — can we call them blind? —
Of godlike sight, the vision of the mind;
Shakespeare, who calmly looked creation through,
"Exhausted worlds, and then imagined new, —"
Plato the sage, so thoughtful and serene,
He seems a prophet by his heavenly mien;
Shrewd Socrates, whose philosophic power
Xantippe proved in many a trying hour;
And Aristophanes, whose humor run
In vain endeavor to be — "cloud" the sun;
Majestic Æschylus, whose glowing page
Holds half the grandeur of the Athenian stage;
Pindar, whose Odes, replete with heavenly fire,
Proclaim the master of the Grecian lyre;

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Anacreon, famed for many a luscious line
Devote to Venus and the god of wine.
I love vast libraries ; yet there is a doubt
If one be better with them or without, —
Unless he use them wisely, and, indeed,
Knows the high art of what and how to read.
At Learning's fountain it is sweet to drink,
But 'tis a nobler privilege to think ;
And oft, from books apart, the thirsting mind
May make the nectar which it cannot find.
'Tis well to borrow from the good and great ;
'Tis wise to learn ; 'tis godlike to create.

JOHN GODFREY SAXE

WHAT is a great love of books ? It is something like a personal introduction to the great and good men of all past times. Books, it is true, are silent as you see them on their shelves ; but, silent as they are, when I enter a library I feel as if almost the dead were present, and I know if I put questions to these books they will answer me with all the faithfulness and fulness which has been left in them by the great men who have left the books with us. Have none of us, or may I not say are there any of us who have not, felt some of this feeling when in a great library ? When you are within its walls, and see these shelves, these thousands of volumes, and consider for a moment who they are that wrote them, who has gathered them together, for whom they are intended, how much wisdom they contain, what they tell the future ages, it is impossible not to feel something of solemnity and tranquillity when you are spending time in rooms like these ; and if you come to houses of less note, you find libraries

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that are of great estimation and which in a less degree are able to afford mental aliment to those who are connected with them; and I am bound to say — and if any one cares very much for anything else, they will not blame me — I say to them, you may have in a house costly pictures and costly ornaments, and a great variety of decoration, yet, so far as my judgment goes, I would prefer to have one comfortable room well stocked with books to all you can give me in the way of decoration which the highest art can supply. The only subject of lamentation is — one feels that always, I think, in the presence of a library — that life is too short, and I am afraid I must say also that our industry is so far deficient that we seem to have no hope of a full enjoyment of the ample repast that is spread before us. In the houses of the humble a little library in my opinion is a most precious possession.

JOHN BRIGHT

Speech at the Birmingham Free Library

BOOKS are our household gods; and we cannot prize them too highly. They are the only gods in all the Mythologies that are ever beautiful and unchangeable; for they betray no man, and love their lovers. . . . Amongst the many things we have to be thankful for, as the result of modern discoveries, surely this of printed books is the highest of all; and I, for one, am so sensible of its merits that I never think of the name of Gutenberg without feelings of veneration and homage. . . .

Who does not love John Gutenberg? — the man that with his leaden types has made the invisible thoughts and imaginations of the Soul visible and readable to all and by all, and secured for the worthy a double immortality?

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The birth of this person was an era in the world's history second to none save that of the Advent of Christ. The dawn of printing was the outburst of a new revelation, which, in its ultimate unfoldings and consequences, are alike inconceivable and immeasurable. . . .

Formerly, the Ecclesiastics monopolized the literature of the world; they were indeed in many cases the Authors and Transcribers of books; and we are indebted to them for the preservation of the old learning. Now, every Mechanic is the possessor of a Library, and many have Plato and Socrates, as well as Chaucer and the Bards, for his companions. I call this a heavenly privilege, and the greatest of all known miracles, notwithstanding it is so cheap and common. Plato died above two thousand years ago, yet in these printed books he lives and speaks forever. . . . I think we should all of us be grateful for books; they are our best friends and most faithful companions. They instruct, cheer, elevate, and ennoble us; and in whatever mood we go to them, they never frown upon us, but receive us with cordial and loving sincerity; neither do they blab, or tell tales of us when we are gone, to the next comer; but honestly, and with manly frankness, speak to our hearts in admonition or encouragement. I do not know how it is with other men, but I have so much reverence for these silent and beautiful friends that I feel in them to have an immortal and divine possession, which is more valuable to me than many estates and kingdoms. . . . I like to be alone in my chamber, and obey the muse or the spirit. We make too little of books, and have quite lost the meaning of *contemplation*. Our times are too busy; too exclusively *outward* in their tendency; and men have lost their bal-

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ance in the whirlpools of commerce and the fierce tornadoes of political strife. I want to see more poise in men, more self-possession ; and these can only be obtained by *communion* with books. I lay stress on the word *communion*, because, although *reading* is common enough, *communion* is but little known as a modern experience. If an author be worth anything, he is worth bottoming. . . . Books should be our constant companions, for they stimulate thought, and hold a man to his purpose.

GEORGE SEARLE PHILLIPS (January Searle)

The Choice of Books

EVERY book is, in an intimate sense, a circular letter to the friends of him who writes it. They alone take his meaning ; they find private messages, assurances of love, and expressions of gratitude, dropped for them in every corner. The public is but a generous patron who defrays the postage. Yet though the letter is directed to all, we have an old and kindly custom of addressing it on the outside to one. Of what shall a man be proud, if he is not proud of his friends ?

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Travels with a Donkey

SUMMER fading, winter comes —
Frosty mornings, tingling thumbs,
Window robins, winter rooks,
And the picture story-books.

Water now is turned to stone
Nurse and I can walk upon ;
Still we find the flowing brooks
And the picture story-books.

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All the pretty things put by,
Wait upon the children's eye,
Sheep and shepherds, trees and crooks,
In the picture story-books.

We may see how all things are,
Seas and cities, near and far,
And the flying fairies' looks,
In the picture story-books.

How am I to sing your praise,
Happy chimney-corner days,
Sitting safe in nursery nooks,
Reading picture story-books?

R. L. STEVENSON
A Child's Garden of Verses

FOR I am speaking now of the use of books in our leisure hours. I will take the books of simple enjoyment, books that one can laugh over and weep over; and learn from, and laugh or weep again; which have in them humor, truth, human nature in all its sides, pictures of the great phases of human history; and withal sound teaching in honesty, manliness, gentleness, patience. Of such books, I say, books accepted by the voice of all mankind as matchless and immortal, there is a complete library at hand for every man, in his every mood, whatever his tastes or his acquirements. To know merely the hundred volumes or so of which I have spoken would involve the study of years. But who can say that these books are read as they might be, that we do not neglect them for

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something in a new cover, or which catches our eye in a library? It is not merely to the idle and unreading world that this complaint holds good. It is the insatiable readers themselves who so often read to the least profit. Of course they have read all these household books many years ago, read them, and judged them, and put them away forever. They will read infinite dissertations about these authors; they will write you essays on their works; they will talk most learned criticism about them. But it never occurs to them that such books have a daily and perpetual value, such as the devout Christian finds in his morning and evening psalm; that the music of them has to sink into the soul by continual renewal; that we have to live with them and in them, till their ideal world habitually surrounds us in the midst of the real world; that their great thoughts have to stir us daily anew, and their generous passion has to warm us hour by hour; just as we need each day to have our eyes filled by the light of heaven, and our blood warmed by the glow of the sun. I vow that, when I see men, forgetful of the perennial poetry of the world, muckraking in a litter of fugitive refuse, I think of that wonderful scene in the Pilgrim's Progress, where the Interpreter shows the wayfarers the old man raking in the straw and dust, whilst he will not see the Angel who offers him a crown of gold and precious stones.

This gold, refined beyond the standard of the goldsmith, these pearls of great price, the united voice of mankind has assured us are found in those immortal works of every age and of every race whose names are household words throughout the world. And we shut our eyes to them for the sake of the straw and litter of

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the nearest library or bookshop. A lifetime will hardly suffice to know, as they ought to be known, these great masterpieces of man's genius. How many of us can name ten men who may be said entirely to know (in the sense in which a thoughtful Christian knows the Psalms and the Epistles) even a few of the greatest? I take them almost at random, and I name Homer, Æschylus, Aristophanes, Virgil, Dante, Ariosto, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Calderon, Corneille, Molière, Milton, Fielding, Goethe, Scott. Of course every one has read these, but who really knows them, the whole meaning of them? They are too often taken "as read," as they say in the railway meetings.

Take of this immortal choir the liveliest, the easiest, the most familiar, take for the moment the three — Cervantes, Molière, Fielding. Here we have three men who unite the profoundest insight into human nature with the most inimitable wit: *Penseroso* and *L'Allegro* in one; "sober, steadfast, and demure," and yet with "Laughter holding both his sides." And in all three, different as they are, is an unfathomable pathos, a brotherly pity for all human weakness, spontaneous sympathy with all human goodness. To know *Don Quixote*, that is to follow out the whole mystery of its double world, is to know the very tragi-comedy of human life, the contrast of the ideal with the real, of chivalry with good sense, of heroic failure with vulgar utility, of the past with the present, of the impossible sublime with the possible commonplace. And yet to how many reading men is *Don Quixote* little more than a book to laugh over in boyhood? So Molière is read or witnessed; we laugh and we praise. But how little do we study with

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insight that elaborate gallery of human character; those consummate types of almost every social phenomenon; that genial and just judge of imposture, folly, vanity, affectation, and insincerity; that tragic picture of the brave man born out of his time, too proud and too just to be of use in his age! Was ever truer word said than that about Fielding as "the prose Homer of human nature"? And yet how often do we forget in Tom Jones the beauty of unselfishness, the wellspring of goodness, the tenderness, the manly healthiness and heartiness underlying its frolic and its satire, because we are absorbed, it may be, in laughing at its humor, or are simply irritated by its grossness! Nay, Robinson Crusoe contains (not for boys but for men) more religion, more philosophy, more psychology, more political economy, more anthropology, than are found in many elaborate treatises on these special subjects. And yet, I imagine, grown men do not often read Robinson Crusoe, as the article has it, "for instruction of life and ensample of manners." The great books of the world we have once read; we take them as read; we believe that we read them; at least, we believe that we know them. But to how few of us are they the daily mental food! For once that we take down our Milton, and read a book of that "voice," as Wordsworth says, "whose sound is like the sea," we take up fifty times a magazine with something about Milton, or about Milton's grandmother, or a book stuffed with curious facts about the houses in which he lived, and the juvenile ailments of his first wife.

FREDERIC HARRISON

The Choice of Books

The Friendship of Books

THEN, warmly walled with books,
While my wood-fire supplies the sun's defect,
Whispering old forest-sagas in its dreams,
I take my May down from the happy shelf
Where perch the world's rare song-birds in a row,
Waiting my choice to open with full breast,
And beg an alms of spring-time, ne'er denied
Indoors by vernal Chaucer, whose fresh woods
Throb thick with merle and mavis all the year.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

Under the Willows

THE books which reward me have been found an equal resource in both respects, both against the weather from without and from within, against physical and mental storms; and, if it might be so, I would pass on to others the comfort which a seasonable word has often brought to me. If I were to look round these shelves, what a host of well-loved names would rise up, in those who have said brave or wise words to comfort and aid their brethren in adversity. It seems as if little remained to be said; but in truth there is always waste land in the human heart to be tilled.

SIR ARTHUR HELPS

Companions of my Solitude

I LOVE my books as drinkers love their wine;
The more I drink, the more they seem divine;
With joy elate my soul in love runs o'er,
And each fresh draught is sweeter than before!
Books bring me friends where'er on earth I be,
Solace of solitude, — bonds of society!

Friends at Home

I love my books ! they are companions dear,
Sterling in worth, in friendship most sincere ;
Here talk I with the wise in ages gone,
And with the nobly gifted of our own ;
If love, joy, laughter, sorrow please my mind,
Love, joy, grief, laughter in my books I find.

FRANCIS BENNOCH

My Books

THE Library entered, the door closed, no sound to break the solemn hush which reigns around, one soon discerns how manifold are the ways in which the mind is tranquillized, deliciously solicited and sustained in its attention, by the sweet synod of Book-souls. Here it is good to be, in every mood ; here, you can raise pleasure to her height ; you can, also, purge off the gloom which overcasts the mind in outer concerns, and heal the scar of the world's corrosive fires, if you will only make a beginning, if you will, indeed, only come hither. . . .

Sympathy through Books has indeed a divineness in it ; attachments may spring up which the world's spirit cannot comprehend ; which are uninfluenced by opinions or diverse lines of reading, and which decay not with the lapse of years. The amenities of literature are innumerable, and their delicacy and deliciousness denote not fragility ; they do not wither on the threshold of the Library, nor sink into the darkness of the grave ; there is the immortality of the tenderness and beauty, which smile over all the universe, and in the fields of heaven.

FRANK CARR (Launcelot Cross)

The Friendship of Books

THE Book-world is one sphere in which I always find myself youthful in heart and memories. As flowers are the earth's first sweetest mercies, so are books one of the soul's most exquisite delights — frequently the balm for wounded affections, and the genial companions of our silent hours.

ALEXANDER LAMONT

Wayside Wells; or, Thoughts from Deepdale

BOOKS are the windows through which the soul looks out. A home without books is like a room without windows. No man has a right to bring up his children without surrounding them with books, if he has the means to buy them. It is a wrong to his family. He cheats them! Children learn to read by being in the presence of books. The love of knowledge comes with reading and grows upon it. And the love of knowledge, in a young mind, is almost a warrant against the inferior excitement of passions and vices. Let us pity these poor rich men who live barrenly in great bookless houses! Let us congratulate the poor that, in our day, books are so cheap that a man may every year add a hundred volumes to his library for the price his tobacco and his beer would cost him. Among the earliest ambitions to be excited in clerks, workmen, journeymen, and, indeed, among all that are struggling up in life from nothing to something, is that of forming and continually adding to a library of good books. A little library, growing larger every year, is an honorable part of a man's history. It is a man's duty to have books. A library is not a luxury, but one of the necessities of life.

HENRY WARD BEECHER

Sermons

Friends at Home

IT is because our books are friends that do change, and remind us of change, that we should keep them with us, even at a little inconvenience, and not turn them adrift in the world to find a dusty asylum in cheap book-stalls.

ANDREW LANG
The Library

NOT only does a library contain "infinite riches in a little room," but we may sit at home and yet be in all quarters of the earth. We may travel round the world with Captain Cook or Darwin, with Kingsley or Ruskin who will show us much more perhaps than ever we should see for ourselves. The world itself has no limits for us; Humboldt and Herschel will carry us far away to the mysterious nebulae, beyond the sun and even the stars: time has no more bounds than space; history stretches out behind us, and geology will carry us back for millions of years before the creation of man, even to the origin of the material Universe itself. Nor are we limited to one plane of thought. Aristotle and Plato will transport us into a sphere none the less delightful because we cannot appreciate it without some training.

Comfort and consolation, refreshment and happiness, may indeed be found in his library by any one "who shall bring the golden key that unlocks its silent door." A library is true fairyland, a very palace of delight, a haven of repose from the storms and troubles of the world. Rich and poor can enjoy it equally, for here, at least, wealth gives no advantage. We may make a library, if we do but rightly use it, a true paradise on earth, a garden of Eden without its one drawback; for all is open

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to us, including, and especially, the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, for which we are told that our first mother sacrificed all the Pleasures of Paradise. Here we may read the most important histories, the most exciting volumes of travels and adventures, the most interesting stories, the most beautiful poems; we may meet the most eminent statesmen, poets, and philosophers, benefit by the ideas of the greatest thinkers, and enjoy the grandest creations of human genius.

SIR JOHN LUBBOCK

The Pleasures of Life: A Song of Books

BOOKS are delightful society. If you go into a room filled with books, and even without taking them down from their shelves, they seem to speak to you, seem to welcome you, seem to tell you that they have something inside their covers that will be good for you, and that they are willing and desirous to impart it to you. Value them, and endeavor to turn them to account.

W. E. GLADSTONE

Address at Saltny, 1889

IN this world of books, as in the world of life, you will find there are not so very many real friends after all. You may consider yourself fortunate if you find a hundred or even fifty. Having found them, "grapple them to your soul with hooks of steel." If you are worthy of their friendship; if you are courteous and grateful for their courtesy and lovingkindness, they will keep nothing from you. They will capture you with their enchanter eyes and lead you to pleasant places. In their company you will travel richly and live in rich

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experiences. Shakespeare's revealing magic will make you know real men and women as you could never have known them of your own knowledge. Homer will chant to you of the deeds of his heroes. Icelandic poets will troll the Sagas of their Vikings. Historians will unroll the scrolls of time and blazon on them the many-colored robes of the people of the world as they pass from the darkness across the light into the darkness again. All these things shall be done for you alone; not in a public place, but in the quiet seclusion of your study or the hidden nook of your summer garden. Here is enough possibility of experience to last you your lifetime. Do not be overeager to make too many acquaintances at one time. The gods were ever jealous of each other. Therefore go to each as your spirit moves you, and leave him the moment you feel you have touched hands. In that moment there will have been imparted to you some of the author's spirit which you will do well to keep as your own. It is the touch that shall make you kin with all the rest. The hour you set aside for the reading of one of these books should be a sacred hour; for the spirit of the writer is the spirit of the place for the time being, and the ground you stand on is therefore made holy. But be of good courage, of good cheer, of a clean mind and a tempered spirit, and the great one shall find it pleasant to remain with you and, mayhap, abide with you always. So shall you, yourself, become a good friend, a true lover, a fine father, and an excellent good fellow.

"A book, like a person," said Walter Pater, "has its fortunes with one; is lucky and unlucky, in the precise moment of its falling in our way, and often by some

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happy accident counts with us for something more than its independent value." That is the moment to which I have just referred. It will be often wise to put off the reading of a book; perhaps only to glance idly at its pages to see if your mood is just then the book's mood, or if your mood finds its proper air in the book. If you are not held, let it go; the right time has not yet come; but it certainly will. "Some happy accident," mayhap, will send you to it, or it to you, and then it will become the wonder-working thing which you had sought for your life long. A new world will then open before you at the touch of this magician's wand. Like the apple that dropped into Newton's lap, it may send you exploring mysteries and lead you to a new revelation; or it may inspire you to some great deed, or bring you back loving to the dear one you parted from in anger.

To be fortunate in such a happy accident, the books must be at hand where you can see them at all times of your leisure. Let them be about you, even if you do not touch them for years. They can wait, if you can. But let them be there; for you never know when the voice in the temple of your mind will call you. And let them be there also for the sake of their presence. Their silent breathing will perfume the air of your home and make it a place pleasant to live in. Their silent companionship will appeal to the better part of you, and you will hesitate in your follies; you must be a gentleman to live with gentlemen. "Come, my best friends, my books," you will say with Cowley, "and lead me on."

TEMPLE SCOTT
The Pleasure of Reading

II

INSPIRERS OF THE HEART

II

INSPIRERS OF THE HEART





BOOKS never pall on me. . . . They discourse with us, they take counsel with us, and are united to us by a certain living chatty familiarity. And not only does each book inspire the sense that it belongs to its readers, but it also suggests the name of others, and one begets the desire of the other.

FRANCESCO PETRARCA
Epistola de Rebus Familiaribus

WHO reads
Incessantly, and to his reading brings not
A spirit and judgment equal or superior,
Uncertain and unsettled still remains ;
Deep-versed in books, but shallow in himself.

JOHN MILTON
Paradise Regained

BOOKS are indispensable, not for what they teach, but for what they suggest.

MARIE VALYÈRE

Inspirers of the Heart

To his Books ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

BRIGHT books ! the perspective to our weak sights,
The clear projection of discerning lights,
Burning and shining thoughts, man's posthume day,
The track of fee'd souls, and their milkie way ;
The dead alive and busie, the still voice
Of enlarged spirits, kind Heaven's white decoys !
Who lives with you lives like those knowing flowers,
Which in commerce with light spend all their hours ;
Which shut to clouds, and shadows nicely shun,
But with glad haste unveil to kiss the Sun.
Beneath you all is dark and a dead night,
Which whoso lives in wants both health and right.

By sucking you the wise, like bees, do grow
Healing and rich, though this they do most slow,
Because most choicely ; for as great a store
Have we of Books as bees of herbs, or more ;
And the great task to try, then know, the good,
To discern weeds, and judge of wholesome food,
Is a rare scant performance. For man dyes
Oft ere 'tis done, while the bee feeds and flyes.
But you were all choice flowers ; all set and dressed
By old sage florists, who well knew the best ;
And I amidst you all am turned to weed,
Not wanting knowledge, but for want of heed.
Then thank thyself, wild fool, that would'st not be
Content to know, — what was too much for thee.

HENRY VAUGHAN
Silex Scintillans

The Friendship of Books

THE reading of books, what is it but conversing with the wisest men of all ages and all countries, who thereby communicate to us their most deliberate thoughts, choicest notions, and best inventions, couched in good expression, and digested in exact method?

ISAAC BARROW

*Sermons: "Of Industry in our Particular
Calling as Scholars."*

The difference between a Story and a Poem ∞

A POEM is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth. There is this difference between a story and a poem, that a story is a catalogue of detached facts, which have no other connection than time, place, circumstance, cause, and effect; the other is the creation of actions according to the unchangeable forms of human nature as existing in the mind of the creator, which is itself the image of all other minds. The one is partial, and applies only to a definite period of time, and a certain combination of events which can never again recur; the other is universal, and contains within itself the germ of a relation to whatever motives or actions have place in the possible varieties of human nature. Time, which destroys the beauty and the use of the story of particular facts, stripped of the poetry which should invest them, augments that of poetry, and forever develops new and wonderful applications of the eternal truth which it contains. Hence epitomes have been called the moths of just history; they eat out the poetry of it. A story of particular facts is as a mirror which obscures

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and distorts that which should be beautiful: poetry is a mirror which makes beautiful that which is distorted.

P. B. SHELLEY

A Defence of Poetry

AND of this let every one be assured — that he owes to the impassioned books which he has read, many a thousand more of emotions than he can consciously trace back to them. Dim by their origination, these emotions yet arise in him, and mould him through life like the forgotten incidents of childhood.

THOMAS DE QUINCEY

Essays on Pope

THE book, and the events that marked the time of its perusal, weld into one; and especially it will be so if, in any instance, the heavy hammer of suffering and sorrow has come, stroke upon stroke, so as to make all one in the memory. Taking a glance round at my own shelves, I see books, never to be forgotten — for they were in course of reading at such and such a time.

ISAAC TAYLOR

Personal Recollections ("Good Words," 1865)

MY days among the Dead are pass'd;
Around me I behold,
Where'er these casual eyes are cast,
The mighty minds of old;
My never failing friends are they,
With whom I converse day by day.

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With them I take delight in weal,
And seek relief in woe ;
And while I understand and feel
How much to them I owe,
My cheeks have often been bedew'd
With tears of thoughtful gratitude.

My thoughts are with the Dead : with them
I live in long-past years ;
Their virtues love, their faults condemn,
Partake their hopes and fears,
And from their lessons seek and find
Instruction with an humble mind.

My hopes are with the Dead, anon
My place with them will be,
And I with them shall travel on
Through all Futurity ;
Yet leaving here a name, I trust,
That will not perish in the dust.

ROBERT SOUTHEY

YOUNG readers—you, whose hearts are open, whose understandings are not yet hardened, and whose feelings are not yet exhausted nor encrusted with the world, take from me a better rule than any profession of criticism will teach you ! Would you know whether the tendency of a book is good or evil, examine in what state of mind you lay it down. Has it induced you to suspect that what you have been accustomed to think unlawful, may after all be innocent, and that may be harmless

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which you have hitherto been taught to think dangerous? Has it tended to make you dissatisfied and impatient under the control of others, and disposed you to relax in that self-government without which both the laws of God and man tell us there can be no virtue, and consequently no happiness? Has it attempted to abate your admiration and reverence for what is great and good, and to diminish in you the love of your country, and your fellow-creatures? Has it addressed itself to your pride, your vanity, your selfishness, or any other of your evil propensities? Has it defiled the imagination with what is loathsome, and shocked the heart with what is monstrous? Has it disturbed the sense of right and wrong which the Creator has implanted in the human soul? If so, if you are conscious of all or any of these effects, or if having escaped from all, you have felt that such were the effects it was intended to produce, throw the book in the fire, whatever name it may bear in the title-page!

Throw it in the fire, young man, though it should have been the gift of a friend; young lady, away with the whole set, though it should be the prominent furniture of a rosewood bookcase.

ROBERT SOUTHEY

The Doctor

HOW peacefully they stand together, . . . Papists and Protestants side by side! Their very dust reposes not more quietly in the cemetery. Ancient and Modern, Jew and Gentile, Mahommedan and Crusader, French and English, Spaniards and Portuguese, Dutch and Brazilians, fighting their old battles, silently now,

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upon the same shelf. Fernam Lopez and Pedro de Ayala; John de Laet and Barlaeus, with the historians of Joam Fernandes Vieira; Fox's Martyrs and the Three Conversions of Father Parsons; Cranmer and Stephen Gardiner; Dominican and Franciscan; Jesuit and Philosopher (equally misnamed); Churchmen and Sectarians; Roundheads and Cavaliers!

Here are God's conduits, grave divines; and here
Is nature's secretary, the philosopher:
And wily statesmen, which teach how to tie
The sinews of a city's mystic body;
Here gathering chroniclers: and by them stand
Giddy fantastic poets of each land.

Here I possess these gathered treasures of time, the harvest of so many generations, laid up in my garners: and when I go to the window, there is the lake, and the circle of the mountains, and the illimitable sky. The smile of the bees,

Sic vos non vobis mellificatis apes,

has often been applied to men who have made literature their profession; and among them to whom worldly wealth and worldly honors are objects of ambition, may have reason enough to acknowledge its applicability. But it will bear a happier application, and with equal fitness; for, for whom is the purest honey hoarded that the bees of this world elaborate, if it be not for the man of letters? The exploits of the kings and heroes of old serve now to fill story books for his amusement and instruction. It was to delight his leisure and call forth his admiration that Homer sang and Alexander conquered. It is to gratify his curiosity that adventurers

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have traversed deserts and savage countries and navigators have explored the seas from pole to pole. The revolutions of the planet which he inhabits are but matters for his speculation; and the deluges and conflagrations which it has undergone, problems to exercise his philosophy, . . . or fancy. He is the inheritor of whatever has been discovered by persevering labor, or created by inventive genius. The wise of all ages have heaped up a treasure for him, which rust doth not corrupt, and which thieves cannot break through and steal. . . .

Never can any man's life have been passed more in accord with his own inclinations, nor more answerably to his own desires. Excepting that peace which, through God's infinite mercy, is derived from a higher source, it is to literature, humanly speaking, that I am beholden, not only for the means of subsistence, but for every blessing which I enjoy; . . . health of mind and activity of mind, contentment, cheerfulness, continual employments, and therewith continual pleasure. *Suavissima vita indies sentire se fieri meliorem*; and this, as Bacon has said, and Clarendon repeated, is the benefit that a studious man enjoys in retirement. To the studies which I have faithfully pursued, I am indebted for friends with whom, hereafter, it will be deemed an honor to have lived in friendship; and as for the enemies which they have procured to me in sufficient numbers, . . . happily I am not of the thin-skinned race, . . . they might as well fire small shot at a rhinoceros, as direct their attacks upon me. *In omnibus requiem quaesivi*, said Thomas à Kempis, *sed non inveni nisi in angulis et libellis*. I too have found repose where he did, in books and retirement, but it was there alone I sought it: to these my nature,

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under the direction of a merciful Providence, led me be-
times, and the world can offer nothing which should
tempt me from them.

ROBERT SOUTHEY
Sir Thomas More

ALL these books are the majestic expressions of the universal conscience, and are more to our daily purpose than this year's almanac or this day's newspaper. But they are for the closet, and to be read on the bended knee. Their communications are not to be given or taken with the lips and the end of the tongue, but out of the glow of the cheek, and with the throbbing heart. Friendship should give and take, solitude and time brood and ripen, heroes absorb and enact them. They are not to be held by letters printed on a page, but are living characters translatable into every tongue and form of life. I read them on lichens and bark; I watch them on waves on the beach; they fly in birds, they creep in worms; I detect them in laughter and blushes and eye-sparkles of men and women. These are Scriptures which the missionary might well carry over prairie, desert, and ocean, to Siberia, Japan, Timbuctoo. Yet he will find that the spirit which is in them journeys faster than he, and greets him on his arrival, — was there already long before him. The missionary must be carried by it, and find it there, or he goes in vain. Is there any geography in these things? We call them Asiatic, we call them primeval; but perhaps that is only optical, for Nature is always equal to herself, and there are as good eyes and ears now in the planet as ever were. Only these ejaculations of the soul are uttered one or a few at

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a time, at long intervals, and it takes millenniums to make a Bible.

R. W. EMERSON

Society and Solitude: Books

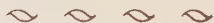
STILL the final test of poems, or any character or work, remains. The prescient poet projects himself centuries ahead, and judges performer or performance after the changes of time. Does it live through them? Does it still hold on untired? Will the same style and the direction of genius to similar points, be satisfactory now? . . . Have the marches of tens and hundreds and thousands of years made willing detours to the right hand and the left hand for his sake? Is he beloved long and long after he is buried? . . .

A great poem is for ages and ages in common, and for all degrees and complexions, and all departments and sects, and for a woman as much as for a man, and a man as much as a woman. A great poem is no finish to a man or woman, but rather a beginning.

WALT WHITMAN

Preface, 1855

“The Imitation of Christ”



AT last Maggie's eyes glanced down on the books that lay on the window-shelf, and she half forsook her reverie to turn over listlessly the leaves of the “Portrait Gallery,” but she soon pushed this aside to examine the little row of books tied together with string. “Beauties of the Spectator,” “Rasselas,” “Economy of Human Life,” “Gregory's Letters” — she knew the sort of matter that

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was inside all these: the "Christian Year"—that seemed to be a hymn-book, and she laid it down again; but *Thomas à Kempis*?—the name had come across her in her reading, and she felt the satisfaction, which every one knows, of getting some ideas to attach to a name that strays solitary in the memory. She took up the little, old, clumsy book with some curiosity; it had the corners turned down in many places, and some hand, now forever quiet, had made at certain passages strong pen-and-ink marks, long since browned by time. Maggie turned from leaf to leaf, and read where the quiet hand pointed. . . . "Know that the love of thyself doth hurt thee more than anything in the world. . . . If thou seekest this or that, and wouldst be here or there to enjoy thy own will and pleasure, thou shalt never be quiet nor free from care: for in everything somewhat will be wanting, and in every place there will be some that will cross thee. . . . Both above and below, which way soever thou dost turn thee, everywhere thou shalt find the Cross: and everywhere of necessity thou must have patience, if thou wilt have inward peace, and enjoy an everlasting crown. . . ."

A strange thrill of awe passed through Maggie while she read, as if she had been awakened in the night by a strain of solemn music, telling of beings whose souls had been astir while hers was in stupor. She went on from one brown mark to another, where the quiet hand seemed to point, hardly conscious that she was reading—seeming rather to listen while a low voice said—" . . . I have often said unto thee, and now again I say the same, For-sake thyself, resign thyself, and thou shalt enjoy much inward peace. . . . Then shall all vain imaginations, evil

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perturbations, and superfluous cares fly away ; then shall immoderate fear leave thee, and inordinate love shall die.”

. . . She read on and on in the old book, devouring eagerly the dialogues with the invisible Teacher, the pattern of sorrow, the source of all strength ; returning to it after she had been called away, and reading till the sun went down behind the willows. . . . She knew nothing of doctrines and systems — of mysticism or quietism ; but this voice out of the far-off middle ages was the direct communication of a human soul’s belief and experience, and came to Maggie as an unquestioned message.

I suppose that is the reason why the small old-fashioned book, for which you need only pay sixpence at a book-stall, works miracles to this day, turning bitter waters into sweetness : while expensive sermons and treatises, newly issued, leave all things as they were before. It was written down by a hand that waited for the heart’s prompting ; it is the chronicle of a solitary, hidden anguish, struggle, trust and triumph — not written on velvet cushions to teach endurance to those who are treading with bleeding feet on the stones. And so it remains to all time a lasting record of human needs and human consolations : the voice of a brother who, ages ago, felt and suffered and renounced — in the cloister, perhaps with the serge gown and tonsured head, with much chanting and long fasts, and with a fashion of speech different from ours — but under the same silent far-off heavens, and with the same passionate desires, the same strivings, the same failures, the same weariness.

GEORGE ELIOT
The Mill on the Floss

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THINK what a book is—what each one of these volumes is. It is a portion of the eternal mind, caught in its process through the world, stamped in an instant, and preserved for eternity. Think what it is; that enormous amount of human sympathy and intelligence that is contained in these volumes. Compare the state of the man who is really well acquainted with the whole past of literature upon the subject on which he is speaking, with that of the solitary artisan, upon whom, perhaps, the light of genius has dawned in some great truth—in some noble aspiration—in some high idea—resting there, unable to accomplish itself, unable to realize its meaning, and probably ending in nothing but discontent or despair. Compare the state of that man, such as he would be without books, with what that man may be with books. It is only books that can present exaggerated conclusions and false doctrines. It is only, remember, what lies in these books that makes all the difference between the wildest socialism that ever passed into the mind of a man in this hall, and the deductions and careful processes of the mind of the student who will sit at these tables—who will learn humility by seeing what others have taught before him; and who will gain from the sympathy of ages, intelligence and sense for himself.

LORD HOUGHTON

Speech at Manchester Free Library

THE mind of a thoughtful looker over a range of volumes, of many dates, and a considerable portion of them old, will sometimes be led into a train of conjectural questions:—Who were they, that, in various

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times and places, have had these in their possession? Perhaps many hands have turned over the leaves, many eyes have passed along the lines. With what measure of intelligence, and of approval or dissent, did those persons respectively follow the train of thoughts? How many of them were honestly intent on becoming wise by what they read? How many sincere prayers were addressed by them to the Eternal Wisdom during the perusal? How many have been determined, in their judgment or their actions, by these books? . . . May not some one of these books be the last that some one person lived to read? Many that have perused them are dead; each made an exit in a manner and with circumstances of its own; what were the manner and circumstances in each instance? It was a most solemn event to that person; but how ignorant concerning it am I, who now perhaps have my eye on the book which he read the last! What a power of association, what an element of intense significance, would invest some of these volumes, if I could have a momentary vision of the last scene of a number of the most remarkable of their former readers! Of that the books can tell me nothing; but let me endeavor to bring the fact, that persons have read them and died, to bear with a salutary influence on my own mind while I am reading any of them. Let me cherish that temper of spirit which is sensible of intimations of what is departed, remaining and mingling with what is present, and can thus perceive some monitory glimpses of even the unknown dead. What multiplied traces of them on some of these books are perceptible to the imagination, which beholds successive countenances, long since "changed and sent away,"

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bent in attention over the pages ! And the minds which looked from within through those countenances, conversing with the thoughts of other minds perhaps long withdrawn, even at that time, from among men — what and where are they now ?

JOHN FOSTER

*Introduction to Doddridge's Rise and Progress
of Religion in the Soul*

BOOKS, like everything else, have their appointed death-day: The souls of them, unless they be found worthy of a second birth in a new body, perish with the paper in which they lived ; and the early folio Hakluyts, not from their own want of merit, but from our neglect of them, were expiring of old age. The five volume quarto edition, published in 1811, so little people then cared for the exploits of their ancestors, consisted but of 270 copies. It was intended for no more than for curious antiquaries, or for the great libraries, where it should be consulted as a book of reference ; and among a people, the greater part of whom had never heard Hakluyt's name, the editors are scarcely to be blamed if it never so much as occurred to them that general readers would care to have the book within their reach.

And yet those five volumes may be called the Prose Epic of the modern English nation. They contain the heroic tales of the exploits of the great men in whom the new era was inaugurated ; not mythic like the Iliads and the Eddas, but plain broad narratives of substantial facts, which rival legend in interest and grandeur. What the old epics were to the royally or nobly born, this modern epic is to the common people. We have no longer

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kings or princes for chief actors, to whom the heroism like the dominion of the world had in time past been confined. But, as it was in the days of the Apostles, when a few poor fishermen from an obscure lake in Palestine assumed, under the Divine mission, the spiritual authority over mankind, so, in the days of our own Elizabeth, the seamen from the banks of the Thames and the Avon, the Plym and the Dart, self-taught and self-directed, with no impulse but what was beating in their own royal hearts, went out across the unknown seas fighting, discovering, colonizing, and graved out the channels, paving them at last with their bones, through which the commerce and enterprise of England has flowed out over all the world. We can conceive nothing, not the songs of Homer himself, which would be read among us with more enthusiastic interest than these plain massive tales. . . . The heroes themselves were the men of the people — the Joneses, the Smiths, the Davises, the Drakes; and no courtly pen, with the one exception of Raleigh, lent its polish or its varnish to set them off. In most cases the captain himself, or his clerk, or servant, or some unknown gentleman volunteer sat down and chronicled the voyage which he had shared; and thus inorganically arose a collection of writings which, with all their simplicity, are for nothing more striking than for the high moral beauty, warmed with natural feeling, which displays itself through all their pages. With us, the sailor is scarcely himself beyond his quarter-deck. If he is distinguished in his profession, he is professional merely; or if he is more than that, he owes it not to his work as a sailor, but to independent domestic culture. With them, their profession was the school of their nature, a high moral education which

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most brought out what was mostly nobly human in them ; and the wonders of earth, and air, and sea, and sky, were a real intelligible language in which they heard Almighty God speaking to them. . . . The high nature of these men, and the high objects which they pursued, will only rise out and become visible to us, as we can throw ourselves back into their times and teach our hearts to feel as they felt.

JAMES ANTHONY FROUDE

*Short Studies on Great Subjects: England's
Forgotten Worthies*

I PASS fairly often a couple of hours in the library, not exactly for my instruction — that ambition cools sensibly — but because, knowing scarcely how to fill up the time which, for all that, glides on irreparably, I find it less irksome when I employ it outside than when I wear it away indoors. Pursuits which are to some extent regulated are more in consonance with my dejection than an access of license which would leave one inert. I experience greater tranquillity among persons who are silent like myself, than when alone amidst a boisterous crowd. I am drawn towards those long halls, some vacant, some peopled by assiduous students, that antique and chill storehouse of human efforts and of all human vanities.

When I dip into Bougainville, Chardin, Laloubère, I become imbued with the old memory of time-worn hands, with the rumor of far-off wisdom, or the youth of the fortunate isles ; but at length forgetting Persepolis, Benares, and Tinian itself, I focus times and places at the actual point whence human faculties perceive them all. I behold those eager minds who acquire in silence and toil, whilst

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the eternal oblivion, rolling over their learned and spell-bound heads, brings close inevitable death, and prepares to obliterate in one instant of Nature their existence, their thought, and their age.

ETIENNE PIVERT DE SENANCOUR
Obermann: Letter XI

WHAT a joy is there in a good book, writ by some great master of thought, who breaks into beauty, as in summer the meadow into grass and dandelions and violets, with geraniums, and manifold sweetness. As an amusement, that of reading is worth all the rest. What pleasure in science, in literature, in poetry, for any man who will but open his eye and his heart to take it in. . . . I once knew a hard-working man, a farmer and mechanic, who in the winter-nights rose a great while before day, and out of the darkness coaxed him at least two hours of hard study, and then when the morning peeped over the eastern hills, he yoked his oxen and went forth to his daily work, or in his shop he labored all day long; and when the night came, he read aloud some simple book to his family; but when they were snugly laid away in their sleep, the great-minded mechanic took to his hard study anew; and so, year out and year in, he went on, neither rich nor much honored, hardly entreated by daily work, and yet he probably had a happiness in his heart and mind which the whole country might have been proud to share.

I fear we do not know what a power of immediate pleasure and permanent profit is to be had in a good book. The books which help you most are those which make

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you think the most. The hardest way of learning is by easy reading; every man that tries it finds it so. But a great book that comes from a great thinker, — it is a ship of thought, deep freighted with truth, with beauty too. It sails the ocean, driven by the winds of heaven, breaking the level sea of life into beauty where it goes, leaving behind it a train of sparkling loveliness, widening as the ship goes on. And what treasures it brings to every land, scattering the seeds of truth, justice, love, and piety, to bless the world in ages yet to come.

THEODORE PARKER

Lessons from the World of Matter and the World of Man

'TIS you then burned the library?

I did,

I brought the fire.

— O most unheard-of crime,
Crime, wretch, which you upon yourself commit!
Why, you have quenched the light of your own soul!
'Tis your own torch which you have just put out!
That which your impious madness has dared burn,
Was your own treasure, fortune, heritage!
The Book (the master's bugbear) is your gain!
The Book has ever taken side with you.
A Library implies an act of faith
Which generations still in darkness hid
Sign in their night in witness of the dawn.
What! miscreant, you fling your flaming torch
Into this pile of venerable truths,
These master-works that thunder forth and lighten,
Into this tomb become time's inventory,
Into the ages, the antique man, the past

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Which still spells out the future — history
Which having once begun will never end,
Into the poets ! Into this mine of Bibles
And all this heap divine — dread Æschylus,
Homer, and Job upright against th' horizon,
Molière, Voltaire, and Kant you set on fire !
Thus turning human reason into smoke !
Have you forgotten that your liberator
Is this same Book ? The Book that's set on **high**
And shines ; because it lightens and illumines ;
It undermines the gallows, war and famine ;
It speaks ; the Slave and Pariah disappear.
Open a Book. Plato, Beccaria, Milton,
Those prophets, Dante, Shakespeare, or Corneille,
Shall not their great souls waken yours in you ?
Dazzled you feel the same as each of them ;
Reading you grow more gentle, pensive, grave ;
Within your heart you feel these great men grow ;
They teach you as the dawn lights up a cloister,
And as their warm beams penetrate your heart
You are appeased and thrill with stronger life ;
Your soul interrogated answers theirs ;
You feel you're good, then better ; — as snow in fire —
Then melt away your pride, your prejudice,
Evil and rage and Kings and Emperors !
For Science, see you, first lays hold of men,
Then Liberty, and all this flood of light,
Mark me, 'tis you who have extinguished it !
The gold you dreamt of by the Book was reached ;
The Book enters your thoughts and there unties
The bonds wherein truth was by error held,
For each man's conscience is a Gordian knot.

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The Book is your physician, guardian, guide :
It heals your hate, and cures your frenzied mood.
See what you lose by your own fault, alas !
Why, know the Book's your wealth ! the Book means
truth,
Knowledge and Duty, Virtue, Progress, Right,
And Reason scattering hence delirious dreams.
And you destroy this, you !

I cannot read.

VICTOR HUGO
L'Année Terrible

Translated by *Mathilde Blind*.

[Quoted from "The Book-lover's Enchiridion," by Alex. Ireland.]

EXCEPT a living man, there is nothing more wonderful than a book !—a message to us from the dead—from human souls whom we never saw, who lived, perhaps, thousands of miles away ; and yet these, on those little sheets of paper, speak to us, amuse us, vivify us, teach us, comfort us, open their hearts to us as brothers. . . . I say we ought to reverence books, to look at them as useful and mighty things. If they are good and true, whether they are about religion or politics, farming, trade, or medicine, they are the message of Christ, the maker of all things, the teacher of all truth, which He has put into the heart of some man to speak, that he may tell us what is good for our spirits, for our bodies, and for our country. Would to God that all here would make the rule never to look into an evil book ! . . . A flood of books, newspapers, writings of all sorts, good and bad, is spreading over the whole land, and young and old will read them.

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We cannot stop that; we ought not; it is God's ordinance. It is more; it is God's grace and mercy that we have a free press in England — liberty for every man, that if he have any of God's truth to tell, he may tell it out boldly, in books or otherwise. A blessing from God! One which we should reverence, for God knows it was dearly bought. Before our forefathers could buy it for us, many an honored man left house and home to die on the battlefield or on the scaffold, fighting and witnessing for the right of every man to whom God's word comes, to speak God's word openly to his countrymen. A blessing, and an awful one! for the same gate which lets in good, lets in evil. The law dare not silence bad books. It dare not root up the tares, lest it root up the wheat also. The men who died to buy us liberty knew that it was better to let in a thousand bad books than shut out one good one. We cannot, then, silence evil books, but we can turn away our eyes from them; we can take care that what we read, and what we let others read, should be good and wholesome.

CHARLES KINGSLEY
Village Sermons

WHAT is your first remark on turning over the great stiff leaves of a folio, the yellow sheets of a manuscript — a poem, a code of laws, a confession of faith? This, you say, did not come into existence all alone. It is but a mould, like a fossil shell, an imprint, like one of those shapes embossed in stone by an animal which lived and perished. Under the shell there was an animal, and behind the document was a man. Why do you study the shell, except to bring before you the animal? So you

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study the document only to know the man. When the work is rich, and people know how to interpret it, we find there the psychology of a soul, frequently of an age, now and then of a race. In this light, a great poem, a fine novel, the confessions of a superior man, are more instructive than a heap of historians with their histories. I would give fifty volumes of charters and a hundred volumes of state papers for the memoirs of Cellini, The Epistles of St. Paul, The Table-talk of Luther, or the Comedies of Aristophanes. In this consists the importance of literary works: they are instructive because they are beautiful: their utility grows with their perfection; and if they furnish documents, it is because they are monuments. The more a book brings sentiments into light, the more it is a work of literature; for the proper office of literature is to make sentiments visible. The more a book represents important sentiments, the higher is its place in literature; for it is by representing the mode of being of a whole nation and a whole age, that a writer rallies round him the sympathies of an entire age and an entire nation. This is why, amid the writings which set before our eyes the sentiments of preceding generations, a literature, and notably a grand literature, is incomparably the best.

HENRI A. TAINÉ

History of English Literature: Introduction

Translated by *Henry Van Laun*.

GATHER'D by geniuses of city, race, or age, and put by them in highest of art's forms, namely, the literary form, the peculiar combinations and the outshows of that city, age, or race, its particular modes of the universal

Inspirers of the Heart

attributes and passions, its faiths, heroes, lovers and gods, wars, traditions, struggles, crimes, emotions, joys (or the subtle spirit of these), having been pass'd on to us to illumine our own selfhood, and its experiences — what they supply, indispensable and highest, if taken away, nothing else in all the world's boundless storehouses could make up to us, or ever again return.

For us, along the great highways of time, those monuments stand — those forms of majesty and beauty. For us those beacons burn through all the nights. Unknown Egyptians, graving hieroglyphs; Hindus, with hymn and apothegm and endless epic; Hebrew prophet, with spirituality, as in flashes of lightning, conscience like red-hot iron, plaintive songs and screams of vengeance for tyrannies and enslavement; Christ, with bent head, brooding love and peace, like a dove; Greek, creating eternal shapes of physical and æsthetic proportion; Roman, lord of satire, the sword, and the codex; — of the figures, some far off and veil'd, others nearer and visible; Dante, stalking with lean form, nothing but fibre, not a grain of superfluous flesh; Angelo, and the great painters, architects, musicians; rich Shakespeare, luxuriant as the sun, artist and singer of feudalism in its sunset, with all the gorgeous colors, owner thereof, and using them at will; and so to such as German Kant and Hegel, where they, though near us, leaping over the ages, sit again, impassive, imperturbable, like the Egyptian gods. Of these, and the like of these, is it too much, indeed, to return to our favorite figure, and view them as orbs and systems of orbs, moving in free paths in the spaces of that other heaven, the cosmic intellect, the soul?

Ye powerful and resplendent ones! ye were, in your

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atmospheres, grown not for America, but rather for her foes, the feudal and the old — while our genius is democratic and modern. Yet could ye, indeed, but breathe your breath of life into our New World's nostrils — not to enslave us, as now, but, for our needs, to breed a spirit like your own — perhaps (dare we to say it ?) to dominate, even destroy, what you yourselves have left ! On your plane, and no less, but even higher and wider, must we mete and measure for to-day and here. I demand races of orbic bards, with unconditional uncompromising sway. Come forth, sweet democratic despots of the west !

WALT WHITMAN
Democratic Vistas

THE altitude of literature and poetry has always been Religion — and always will be. The Indian Vedas, the Naçkas of Zoroaster, the Talmud of the Jews, the Old Testament also, the Gospel of Christ and his disciples, Plato's works, the Koran of Mohammed, the Edda of Snorro, and so on toward our own day, to Swedenborg, and to the invaluable contributions of Leibnitz, Kant, and Hegel, these, with such poems only in which (while singing well of persons and events, of the passions of man, and the shows of the material universe) the religious tone, the consciousness of mystery, the recognition of the future, of the unknown, of Deity, over and under all, and of the divine purpose, are never absent, but indirectly give tone to all — exhibit literature's real heights and elevations, towering, up like the great mountains of the earth.

WALT WHITMAN
Democratic Vistas

Inspirers of the Heart

YES, it is *sentiment* that makes us feel a lively affection for the books that seem to connect us with great poets and students long ago dead. The hands grasp ours across the ages.

ANDREW LANG
The Library

IS it not known that books are sacrificial, that they must be lived and suffered before they are written, and lived and suffered before they are read?

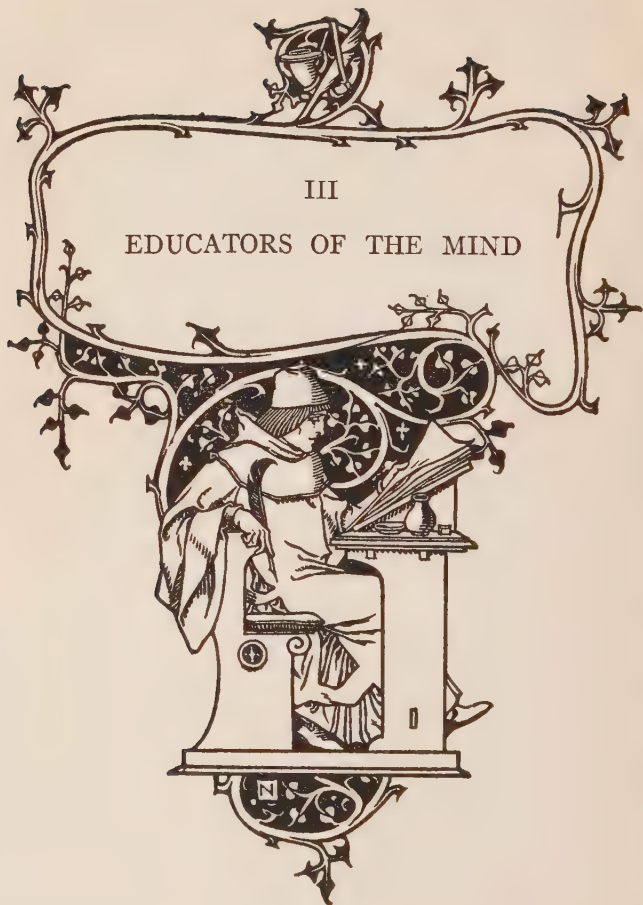
CHARLES FERGUSON
The Religion of Democracy

III

EDUCATORS OF THE MIND

III

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FOR whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.

New Testament, Romans xv. 4

... *THERE are many virtues in books, but the essential value is the adding of knowledge to our stock of the record of new facts, and, better, by the record of intentions which distribute facts, and are the formulas which supersede all histories.*

R. W. EMERSON

Letters and Social Aims: Persian Poetry

THE first time I read an excellent book, it is to me just as if I had gained a new friend; when I read over a book I have perused before, it resembles the meeting with an old one.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH

Citizen of the World

BY reading, we acquaint ourselves with the affairs, actions, and thoughts of the living and the dead, in the most remote actions, and in the most distant ages; and that with as much ease as though they lived in our own age and nation.

ISAAC WATTS

Improvement of the Mind

BY no means have your Study furnish'd with learned Books, and be unlearned yourself. Don't suffer what you hear to slip out of your Memory, but recite it either with yourself, or to other Persons. Nor let this suffice you, but set apart some certain Time for Meditation; which one Thing as St. Aurelius writes does most notably conduce to assist both Wit and Memory. An Engagement and combating of Wits does in an extraordinary Manner both shew the Strength of Genius's, rouses them, and augments them. If you are in Doubt of any Thing, don't be asham'd to ask; or if you have committed an Error, to be corrected. Avoid late and unseasonable Studies, for they murder Wit, and are very prejudicial to Health. The Muses love the Morning, and that is a fit Time for Study. After you have din'd, either divert yourself at some Exercise, or take a Walk, and discourse merrily, and Study between whiles. As for Diet, eat only as much as shall be sufficient to preserve Health, and not as much or more than the Appetite may crave. Before Supper, take a little Walk, and do the same after Supper. A little before you go to sleep read something that is exquisite, and worth remembering; and contemplate upon it till you fall asleep; and when you awake in the Morning, call yourself to an Account for it. Always keep this Sentence of Pliny's in your Mind, *all that time is lost that you don't bestow on study*. Think upon this, that there is nothing more fleeting than Youth, which, when once it is past, can never be recall'd. But

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now I begin to be an Exalter, when I promis'd to be a Director. My sweet Christian, follow this Method, or a better, if you can; and so farewell.

DESIDERIUS ERASMUS

Colloquies: Of the Method of Study

STUDIES serve for Delight, for Ornament, and for Ability. Their Chiefe Use for Delight, is in privatenesse and Retiring; For Ornament, is in Discourse; And for Ability, is in the Judgement and Disposition of Businessse. For Expert Men can Execute, and perhaps Judge of particulars, one by one; But the generall Counsels, and the Plots, and Marshalling of Affaires, come best from those that are LEARNED. To spend too much Time in STUDIES, is Sloth; To use them too much for Ornament, is Affectation; To make Judgement wholly by their Rules is the Humour of a Scholler. They perfect Nature, and are perfected by Experience: For Naturall Abilities, are like Naturall Plants, that need Proyning by STUDY: And STUDIES themselves doe give forth Directions too much at Large, except they be bounded in by experience. Crafty Men Contemne STUDIES; Simple Men Admire them; And Wise Men Use them: For they teach not their owne Use; But that is a Wisdome without them, and above them, won by Observation. Reade not to Contradict, and Confute; Nor to Beleeve and Take for granted; Nor to Finde Talke and Discourse; But to weigh and Consider. Some BOOKES are to be Tasted, Others to be Swallowed, and Some Few to be Chewed and Digested: That is, some BOOKES are to be read onely in Parts; Others to be read but not Curiously; And some Few to be read wholly, and

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with Diligence and Attention. Some BOOKES also may be read by Deputy, and Extracts made of them by Others: But that would be, onely in the lesse important Arguments, and the Meaner Sort of BOOKES: else distilled BOOKES, are like Common distilled Waters, Flashy Things. Reading maketh a Full Man; Conference a Ready Man; And Writing an Exact Man.

LORD BACON
Of Studies

HUGE volumes, like the ox roasted at Bartholomew Fair, may proclaim plenty of labor and invention, but afford less of what is delicate, savory, and well concocted, than smaller pieces: this makes me think, that though, upon occasion, you may come to the table, and examine the bill of fare, set down by such authors; yet it cannot but lessen ingenuity, still to fall aboard with them; human sufficiency being too narrow, to inform with the pure soul of reason, such vast bodies.

As the grave hides the faults of physic, no less than mistakes, opinion and contrary applications are known to have enriched the art withal; so many old books, by like advantages rather than desert, have crawled up to an esteem above new; it being the business of better heads perhaps than ever their writers owned, to put a glorious and significant gloss upon the meanest conceit or improbable opinion of antiquity: whereas modern authors are brought by critics to a strict account for the smallest semblance of a mistake. If you consider this seriously, it will learn you more moderation, if not wisdom.

Be conversant in the speeches, declarations, and trans-

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actions occasioned by the late war: out of which more natural and useful knowledge may be sucked, than is ordinarily to be found in the mouldy records of antiquity.

When I consider with what contradiction reports arrived at us, during our late civil wars, I can give the less encouragement to the reading of history: romances, never acted, being born purer from sophistication than actions reported to be done, by which posterity hereafter, no less than antiquity heretofore, is likely to be led into a false, or at best, but a contingent belief. Caesar, though in this happy, that he had a pen able to grave into neat language what his sword at first more roughly cut out, may, in my judgment, abuse his reader: for he, that for the honor of his own wit, doth make people speak better than can be supposed men so barbarously bred were able, may possibly report they fought worse than really they did. Of a like value are the orations of Thucydides, Livy, Tacitus, and most other historians; which doth not a little prejudice the truth of all the rest. Were it worthy or capable to receive so much illumination from one never made welcome by it, I should tell the world, as I do you, there is as little reason to believe men know certainly all they write, as to think they write all they imagine: and as this cannot be admitted without danger, so the other, though it may in shame be denied, is altogether as true.

A few books well studied, and thoroughly digested, nourish the understanding more than hundreds but gargled in the mouth, as ordinary students use: and of these choice must be had answerable to the profession you intend: for a statesman, French authors are best,

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as most fruitful in negotiations and memoirs, left by public ministers and by their secretaries, published after their deaths: out of which you may be able to unfold the riddles of all states: none making more faithful reports of things done in all nations than ambassadors; who cannot want the best intelligence, because their princes' pensioners unload in their bosoms all they can discover. And here, by way of prevention, let me inform you, that some of our late ambassadors, which I could name, impaired our affairs, by treating with foreign princes in the language of the place: by which they did not only descend below their master's dignity, but their own discretion: betraying, for want of words of gravity, the intrinsic part of their employment: and going beyond their commission oftener by concession, than confining themselves within it, or to it; the true rule for a minister of state, not hard to be gained by a resolute contest: which if made by an interpreter, he, like a medium, may intercept the shame of any impertinent speech, which eagerness or indiscretion may let slip: neither is it a small advantage to gain so much time for deliberation, what is fit farther to urge: it being besides, too much an honoring of their tongue, and undervaluing your own, to profess yourself a master therein, especially since they scorn to learn yours. And to show this is not grounded on my single judgment; I have often been informed, that the first and wisest Earl of Pembroke did return an answer to the Spanish ambassador, in Welsh, for which I have heard him highly commended.

It is an aphorism in physic, that unwholesome airs, because perpetually sucked into the lungs, do distemper health more than coarser diet, used but at set times:

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the like may be said of company, which if good, is a better refiner of the spirits than ordinary books.

Propose not them for patterns, who make all places rattle, where they come, with Latin and Greek; for the more you seem to have borrowed from books, the poorer you proclaim your natural parts, which only can properly be called yours.

Follow not the tedious practice of such as seek wisdom only in learning; not attainable but by experience and natural parts. Much reading, like a too great repletion, stopping up, through a concourse of diverse, sometimes contrary opinions, the access of a nearer, newer, and quicker invention of your own. And for quotations, they resemble sugar in wine, marring the natural taste of the liquor, if it be good; if bad, that of itself: such patches rather making the rent seem greater, by an interruption of the style, than less, if not so neatly applied as to fall in without drawing: nor is any thief in this kind sufferable, who comes not off, like a Lacedemonian, without discovery.

FRANCIS OSBORNE
Advice to a Son (1656)

I WILL now oversee your employment, which at present is your study; and I shall be less careful herein, upon a presumption of your tutor's care and sufficiency in the kind hath prevented me; however, I shall tell you what I have heard a very learned man to speak concerning books and the true use of them.

You are to come to your study as to the table, with a sharp appetite, whereby that which you read may the better digest. He that has no stomach to his book will very hardly thrive upon it.

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And because the rules of study do so exactly agree with those of the table, when you are from your tutor, take care that what you read be wholesome, and but sufficient. Not how much, but how good, is the best diet. Sometimes, for variety, and to refresh and please the palate of your understanding, you may read something that is choice and delicate; but to make no meal thereon. You may be allowed also the music of poetry, so it be clear, chaste, and not effeminate.

After you have read a little, make a stand upon it, and take not more in, nor that down, till it be well chewed and examined. Go not to another thing until the first be understood in some measure. If any thing stick with you, note down your doubts in a book for the purpose, and rest not till you be satisfied, then write that down too.

In your reading, use often to invert and apply that which you observe applicable to some purpose: and if this change be a robbery, God help late writers. Sure I am, nothing to my reason appears more effectual to raise your invention and enrich your understanding.

After reading, remember, as from the table, so you rise from your book, with an appetite; and being up, disturb not the concoction, which is definitely improved by a rumination or chewing of the cud. To this end, recollection with yourself will do well, but a repetition with another far better; for thereby you will get a habit of readily expressing yourself, which is a singular advantage to learning; and by the very discoursing of what you learn, you again teach yourself: besides, something new, and of your own, must of necessity stream in.

For your choice of your books, be advised by your

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tutor; but, by my consent, you should not have above one or two at the most in every science, but those very choice ones. I will commend one book to you, — we begin with it when we are boys, yet it will become the oldest and gravest man's hand, — it is Tully's Office; a most wise and useful book, where you shall have excellent philosophy excellently dressed. And those that are skilful in the language say, that the whole Latin tongue is there with all its purity and propriety.

For the more orderly managing of your study, I would have you divide the day into several employments. Great and wise persons have given you the example. If you will have me dispose your time for you, I shall proportion it into three octaves: eight hours of which for sleep, comprehending dressing and undressing; eight hours for devotion, food and recreation, in which I comprehend visits and your attendance upon me: the other octave, give it constantly to your studies, unless business or like accident interrupt, which, if it shall, you must either recompense by the succeeding day's diligence, or borrow from your recreation. But by no means entrench upon your hours of devotion, which I would have you proportion into little and frequent offices, to sweeten the spirits and prevent wearisomeness. Possibly even these hours also of devotion may sometimes receive interruption by travel or employment of necessity; then your offices must be the less. You may likewise be deprived of the conveniency of place: if so, yet steal a retirement — nothing must hinder you from withdrawing yourself, and a good man makes any place an oratory. But be sure no merry-meeting, pastime, or humoring of others make a breach

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upon your daily exercise of piety — nothing but evident necessity can dispense.

Be not ashamed to ask if you doubt ; but be ashamed to be reproved for the same fault twice.

Be constant in your course of study ; and although you proceed slowly, yet go on in your path ; assiduity will make amends at last. He that can but creep, if he keeps his way, will sooner come to his journey's end than he that rides post out of it.

Endeavor at the highest perfection, not only at your studies, but in whatsoever you attempt : strive to excel in everything, and you may perform many things worthy of praise, nothing meanly. He that aims further than he can shoot, and draws with his utmost strength, will hardly shoot short, at least deserves not to be blamed for short shooting.

Avoid night studies, if you will preserve your wit and health.

Whether thou dost read or hear anything — indeed whatsoever you do — intend what thou art about, and let not thy mind wander, but compel it to be fixed and present. If any other thought comes across thee in thy study, keep it off, and refer it to some other time : this wandering of your spirit you know I have often reproved, therefore, whatsoever you do, do it, and nothing else.

Suffer not thy memory to rest ; she loves exercise, and grows with it ; every day commend something notable to her custody ; the more she receives, the better she keeps ; and when you have trusted any thing to her care, let it rest with her awhile, then call for it again, especially if it be a fault corrected. You must not err twice ; and by this frequent calling her to account, she will

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be always ready to give you satisfaction ; and the sooner, if what she was entrusted with was laid up orderly, and put, as it were, in the several boxes of a cabinet.

If thou wouldst seem learned, the best way is to endeavor to be learned ; for if thou dost not strive to be that which thou desirest to be, thou desirest to no purpose, which gives me occasion to recommend this following advice to your especial regard.

It is an extreme vanity to hope to be a scholar, and yet to be unwilling to take pains : for what excellent thing is there that is easily composed ? Its very difficulty doth imply, and, as it were, doth invite us to something worthy and rare. Consider it is a rose that thorns do compass ; and the forbidden object sharpens the desire in all other things. Thus a difficult mistress makes a lover more passionate ; and that same man hates an offered and a prostitute love. I dare say, if learning were easy and cheap, thou wouldst as much slight her ; and, indeed, who would have anything common with a carter or a cobbler ? Something there is, doubtless, in it, that none but noble and unwearied spirits can attain her ; and these are raised higher, and heightened by its difficulty, and would not gain her otherwise. Something there is in it, that no money or jewels can buy her. No, nothing can purchase learning but thy own sweat ; obtain her, if thou canst, any other way. Not all my estate can buy thee the faculty of making but one quick epigram — the trifling part of her ; wherefore I entreat thee, to raise thy spirit, and stretch thy resolution. And so often as thou goest to thy book, place before thy eyes what crowns, sceptres, mitres, and other ensigns of honor, learning hath conferred

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upon those that have courted her with labor and diligence; besides the rare pleasure of satisfaction, which, of itself, is an honorable reward. And let me tell thee, a learned holy man (and such a one would I fain have thee to be) looks like an angel in flesh — a mortal cherubim. And because letters are great discoverers of the man, therefore, when you write, let your style be genteel, clean, round, even, and plain, unless the subject or matter require a more manly and vigorous expression. I cannot allow you a curiosity, unless it be like a lady's dress, negligently neat. Go not to counsel for every word, yet neglect not to choose. Be more careful to think before you write than before you speak; because letters pass not away as words do; they remain upon record, are still under the examination of the eye, and tortured they are, sometimes, to confess that of which they were never guilty. That is rare, indeed, that can endure reading. Understand the person well to whom you write. If he be your inferior or equal, you may give your pen the more liberty, and play with it sometimes; but if to your superior, then regard it to be had to your interest with him, his leisure, and capacity; all which will be so many caveats, and instructions to the humility, neatness, and brevity of your style. You shall do well if, like a skilful painter, you draw your sense, and the proportions of your business, in a plain draft first, and then give it color, heightening, and beauty afterwards; and, if it be duly considered, it is no such great commendation to be praised for penning a letter without making a blot, not in my judgment: therefore, after you have pondered and penned, then examine and correct. A negligent manner of writing, methinks, is a kind of an affront and

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a challenge, not a letter, to a person of distinction. Avoid all roughness, swelling, poverty, and looseness in your style; let it be rather riotous than niggardly. The flowing pen may be helped, but the dry never. Especially shun obscurity, because it must go a-begging for an interpreter: and why should you write to entreat him to understand you if he can. Be this your general rule, both in your writing and speaking, — labor for sense, rather than words; and for your book, take this also, study men and things.

Perhaps you will expect, after all these instructions, I should commend unto you some copy or example to imitate. As for the Greek and Latin tongues, I leave it to your tutor's choice. In the English, I know no style I should sooner prefer to your imitation than that of Sir Francis Bacon, that excellent unhappy man. And to give you direction for all imitation in general, as well as of his style in particular, be careful so to imitate, as, by drawing forth the very spirits of the writer, you may, if possible, become himself. Imitate him, but do not mock him; for the face of a bull, or a horse, is more comely, than that of an ape or a monkey, though the ape most resembles man, the most beautiful of all creatures: and, in that regard, your own genuine and natural style may show more comely than an imitation of Sir Francis Bacon, if it be not exactly done. I would have the imitator be as the son of the father, not the ape of a man; that is, to put on the likeness of a child, not of an ape: for the ape only imitates the deformities and the ridiculous actions of man, the son represents all the graces of the face, gesture, and every figure of his father; and, in this representation, he hath something of himself too.

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I shall add but one caution more, and that is this — as he can never run well who shall resolve to set his foot in the footsteps of one that went before, so neither shall any man write well, who precisely and superstitiously ties himself to another's words. And with this liberty I wish you still happy.

And such will all your studies be, if you constantly put in practice this my last admonition, which I reserved purposely for this place. It is, that you be careful every night, before you go to bed, to perform your devotions, to withdraw yourself into your closet, or some private part of your chamber, and there call memory, your steward, to account what she has heard or read that day worthy of observation; what she hath laid up, what she spent; how the stock of knowledge improves, where and how she decays. A notable advantage will this bring to your studies at present, and hereafter, if that way employed, to your estate. But if this course be strictly observed each night between God and your soul, there will the true advantage appear. Fail not, therefore, what employment soever you have, every night, as in the presence of God, and his holy angels to pass an inquisition on your soul what ill it hath done, what good it hath left undone; what slips, what falls it hath that day; what temptation hath prevailed upon it; and by what means, or after what manner. Ransack every corner of thy dark heart, and let not the least peccadillo, or kindness to a sin, lurk there, but bring it forth, bewail it, protest against it, and scourge it by a severe sorrow. Thus each day's breach between God and your soul being made up, with more quiet and sweet hope thou mayest dispose thyself to rest. Certainly, at last, this inquisition,

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if steadily pursued, will vanquish all customary sins, whatever they be. I speak it upon this reason, because I presume thou wilt not have the face to appear before God every night confessing the same offence; and thou wilt forbear it, lest thou mayest seem to mock God, or despise him, which is dreadful but to imagine. This finished, for a delightful close to the whole business of the day, cause your servant to read something that is excellently written or done, to lay to sleep with it, that, if it may be, even your dreams may be profitable or learned. This you will find, by your own experience, true, that things will appear more naked to the eye of the soul, when the eye of the body is shut; which, together with the quiet of the night, that time is rendered a most fit season for contemplation and contrivance. As a great advantage, not only to your book, but health and business also, I cannot but advise and enjoin you to accustom yourself to rise early; for, take it from me, no lover of his bed did ever yet form great and noble things. Now, though I allowed eight hours for your bed, with the preparation to it and from it, yet this was rather to point out the utmost limits beyond which you should not go, rather than to oblige you to observe such a proportion exactly. Borrow, therefore, of these golden morning flowers, and bestow them on your book. A noble person, of all others, has need of learning, and therefore, should contribute most time to it; for, besides that it gilds his honor, and sets off his birth, it becomes his employment, which a nobleman, of all others, must not want, if he will secure his soul, honor, and estate, all which are in most certain danger from idleness, the rock of nobility, considering the plenty of his table, and

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society, with all sorts of temptation ; if, therefore, he be a hard student, he is not at leisure to be vicious ; the devil knows it is to no purpose to tempt a busy man ; be always, therefore, employed ; and because some are triflingly active, that you may not with them be idly busy, your book will instruct you how. Did you but hear the complaints of excellent personages, for missing of that opportunity which you are now master of ; or could you but suppose yourself old and ignorant, how tender would you be of the loss of one minute, what would you not give to return to these years you now enjoy ? Let this consideration sink deep and settle in you. Be more curious of the expense of your time than of your gold : time being a jewel whose worth is invaluable, whose loss is irreparable ; therefore secure the present time, that you may not hereafter lose more by a vain bewailing of the past.

WILLIAM, EARL OF BEDFORD

Advice to his Sons (circa 1642)

BOOKS are the only Records of Time, which excite us to imitate the past Glories of our Ancestors.

CHARLES BLOUNT

A Just Vindication of Learning

READING is to the mind, what exercise is to the body. As by the one, health is preserved, strengthened, and invigorated ; by the other, virtue (which is the health of the mind) is kept alive, cherished, and confirmed. But as exercise becomes tedious and painful, when we make use of it only as the means of health, so reading is apt to grow uneasy and burthensome when we apply ourselves to it for our improvement in virtue. For this

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reason, the virtue we gather from a fable or an allegory is like the health we get by hunting; as we are engaged in an agreeable pursuit that draws us on with pleasure, and makes us insensible of the fatigues that accompany it.

SIR RICHARD STEELE

The Tatler, No. 147

A TASTE for books is the pleasure and glory of my life. . . . I would not exchange it for the wealth of the Indies. . . . The miseries of a vacant life are never known to a man whose hours are insufficient for the inexhaustible pleasures of study. . . . The love of study, a passion which derives great vigor from enjoyment, supplies each day, each hour, with a perpetual round of independent and rational pleasure.

EDWARD GIBBON

Autobiography

BOOKS are the depositary of everything that is most honorable to man. Literature, taken in all its bearings, forms the grand line of demarcation between the human and the animal kingdoms. He that loves reading, has everything within his reach. He has but to desire; and he may possess himself of every species of wisdom to judge, and power to perform. . . . Books gratify and excite our curiosity in innumerable ways. They force us to reflect. They hurry us from point to point. They present direct ideas of various kinds, and they suggest indirect ones. In a well-written book we are presented with the maturest reflections, or the happiest flights, of a mind of uncommon excellence. It is impossible that we can be much accustomed to such companions,

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without attaining some resemblance of them. When I read Thomson, I become Thomson; when I read Milton, I become Milton. I find myself a sort of intellectualameleon, assuming the color of the substances on which I rest. He that revels in a well-chosen library has innumerable dishes, and all of admirable flavor. His taste is rendered so acute as easily to distinguish the nicest shades of difference. His mind becomes ductile, susceptible to every impression, and gaining new refinement from them all. His varieties of thinking baffle calculation, and his powers, whether of reason or fancy, become eminently vigorous.

WILLIAM GODWIN
The Enquirer

HENCE it is that the moral character of a man eminent in letters or in the fine arts is treated, often by contemporaries, almost always by posterity, with extraordinary tenderness. The world derives pleasure and advantage from the performances of such a man. The number of those who suffer by his personal vices is small, even in his own time, when compared with the number of those to whom his talents are a source of gratification. In a few years all those whom he has injured disappear. But his works remain, and are a source of delight to millions. The genius of Sallust is still with us. But the Numidians whom he plundered, and the unfortunate husbands who caught him in their houses at unseasonable hours, are forgotten. We suffer ourselves to be delighted by the keenness of Clarendon's observation, and by the sober majesty of his style, till we forget the oppressor and the bigot in the historian. Falstaff and

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Tom Jones have survived the gamekeepers whom Shakespeare cudgelled and the landladies whom Fielding bilked. A great writer is the friend and benefactor of his readers; and they cannot but judge of him under the deluding influence of friendship and gratitude. We all know how unwilling we are to admit the truth of any disgraceful story about a person whose society we like, and from whom we have received favors; how long we struggle against evidence, how fondly, when the facts cannot be disputed, we cling to the hope that there may be some explanation or some extenuating circumstance with which we are unacquainted. Just such is the feeling which a man of liberal education naturally entertains towards the great minds of former ages. The debt which he owes to them is incalculable. They have guided him to truth. They have filled his mind with noble and graceful images. They have stood by him in all vicissitudes, comforters in sorrow, nurses in sickness, companions in solitude. These friendships are exposed to no danger from the occurrences by which other attachments are weakened or dissolved. Time glides on; fortune is inconstant; tempers are soured; bonds which seemed indissoluble are daily sundered by interest, by emulation, or by caprice. But no such cause can affect the silent converse which we hold with the highest of human intellects. That placid intercourse is disturbed by no jealousies or resentments. These are the old friends who are never seen with new faces, who are the same in wealth and in poverty, in glory and in obscurity. With the dead there is no rivalry. In the dead there is no change. Plato is never sullen. Cervantes is never petulant. Demosthenes never comes unseasonably. Dante never

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stays too long. No difference of political opinion can alienate Cicero. No heresy can excite the horror of Bossuet.

LORD MACAULAY
Francis Bacon

CERTAINLY the art of writing is the most miraculous of all things man has devised. Odin's *Runes* were the first form of the work of a Hero; *Books*, written words, are still miraculous *Runes*, of the latest form! In Books lies the *soul* of the whole Past Time; the articulate audible voice of the Past, when the body and material substance of it has altogether vanished like a dream. Mighty fleets and armies, harbors and arsenals, vast cities, high-domed, many-engined, — they are precious, great: but what do they become? Agamemnon, the many Agamemnons, Pericleses, and their Greece; all is gone now to some ruined fragments, dumb mournful wrecks and blocks: but the Books of Greece! There Greece, to every thinker, still very literally lives; can be called up again into life. No magic *Rune* is stranger than a Book. All that Mankind has done, thought, gained, or been: it is lying as in magic preservation in the pages of Books. They are the chosen possession of men.

Do not Books still accomplish *miracles*, as *Runes* were fabled to do? They persuade men. Not the wretchedest circulating-library novel, which foolish girls thumb and con in remote villages, but will help to regulate the actual practical weddings and households of those foolish girls. So "Celia" felt, so "Clifford" acted: the foolish Theorem of Life, stamped into those young brains,

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comes out as a solid Practice one day. Consider whether any *Rune* in the wildest imagination of Mythologist ever did such wonders as, on the actual firm Earth, some Books have done! What built St. Paul's Cathedral? Look at the heart of the matter, it was that divine Hebrew Book, — the word partly of the man Moses, an outlaw tending his Midianitish herds, four thousand years ago, in the wildernesses of Sinai! It is the strangest of things, yet nothing is truer. With the art of Writing, of which Printing is a simple, an inevitable, and comparatively insignificant corollary, the true reign of miracles for mankind commenced. It related, with a wondrous new contiguity and perpetual closeness, the Past and Distant with the Present in time and place; all times and all places with this our actual Here and Now. All things were altered for men; all modes of important work of men: teaching, preaching, governing, and all else.

On all sides, are we not driven to the conclusion that, of the things which man can do or make here below, by far the most momentous, wonderful, and worthy are the things we call Books! Those poor bits of rag-paper with black ink on them; — from the Daily Newspaper to the sacred Hebrew Book, what have they not done, what are they not doing! — For indeed, whatever be the outward form of the thing (bits of paper, as we say, and black ink), is it not verily, at bottom, the highest act of man's faculty that produces a Book? It is the *Thought* of man; the true thaumaturgic virtue; by which man works all things whatsoever. All that he does, and brings to pass, is the vesture of a Thought. This London City, with all its houses, palaces, steam-engines,

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cathedrals, and huge immeasurable traffic and tumult, what is it but a Thought, but millions of Thoughts made into One; — a huge immeasurable Spirit of a THOUGHT, embodied in brick, in iron, smoke, dust, Palaces, Parliaments, Hackney Coaches, Katherine Docks, and the rest of it! Not a brick was made but some man had to *think* of the making of that brick. — The thing we called “bits of paper with traces of black ink” is the *purest* embodiment a Thought of man can have. No wonder it is, in all ways, the activist and noblest.

THOMAS CARLYLE

*On Heroes and Hero-Worship: The Hero as
Man of Letters*

A CAPACITY and taste for reading gives access to whatever has already been discovered by others. It is the key, or one of the keys, to the already solved problems. And not only so; it gives a relish and facility for successfully pursuing the unsolved ones.

. . . The thought recurs that education — cultivated thought — can best be combined with agricultural labor, or any labor, on the principle of thorough work; that careless, half-performed, slovenly work makes no place for such combination; and thorough work, again, renders sufficient the smallest quantity of ground to each man; and this, again, conforms to what must occur in a world less inclined to wars and more devoted to the arts of peace than heretofore. Population must increase rapidly, more rapidly than in former times, and ere long the most valuable of all arts will be the art of deriving a comfortable subsistence from the smallest area of soil. No community whose every member possesses this art can

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ever be the victim of oppression in any of its forms. Such community will be alike independent of crowned kings, money kings, and land kings. . . . It is said an Eastern monarch once charged his wise men to invent him a sentence to be ever in view, and which should be true and appropriate in all times and situations. They presented him the words, "And this, too, shall pass away." How much it expresses! How chastening in the hour of pride! How consoling in the depths of affliction! "And this, too, shall pass away." And yet, let us hope, it is not quite true. Let us hope, rather, that by the best cultivation of the physical world beneath and around us, and the intellectual and moral world within us, we shall secure an individual, social, and political prosperity and happiness, whose course shall be onward and upward, and which, while the earth endures, shall not pass away.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Address before the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society, at Milwaukee, 1859

"I SAY, then, that books, taken indiscriminately, are no cure to the disease and afflictions of the mind. There is a world of science necessary in the taking them. I have known some people in great sorrow fly to a novel, or the last light book in fashion. One might as well take a rose-draught for the plague! Light reading does not do when the heart is really heavy. I am told that Goethe, when he lost his son, took to study a science that was new to him. Ah! Goethe was a physician who knew what he was about. In a great grief like that, you cannot tickle and divert the mind; you must wrench

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it away, abstract, absorb, bury it in an abyss, hurry it into a labyrinth. Therefore, for the irremediable sorrows of middle life and old age, I recommend a strict chronic course of science and hard reasoning — counter-irritation. Bring the brain to act upon the heart! If science is too much against the grain (for we have not all got mathematical heads), something in the reach of the humblest understanding, but sufficiently searching to the highest — a new language — Greek, Arabic, Scandinavian, Chinese, or Welsh! For the loss of fortune, the dose should be applied less directly to the understanding — I would administer something elegant and cordial. For as the heart is crushed and lacerated by a loss in the affections, so it is rather the head that aches and suffers by the loss of money. Here we find the higher class of poets a very valuable remedy. For observe that poets of the grander and more comprehensive kind of genius have in them two separate men, quite distinct from each other — the imaginative man, and the practical, circumstantial man; and it is the happy mixture of these that suits diseases of the mind, half imaginative and half practical. There is Homer, now lost with the gods, now at home with the homeliest, the very ‘poet of circumstance,’ as Gray has finely called him; and yet with imagination enough to seduce and coax the dullest into forgetting, for a while, that little spot on his desk which his banker’s book can cover. There is Virgil, far below him indeed —

Virgil the wise,

Whose verse walks highest, but not flies,

as Cowley expresses it. But Virgil still has genius enough to be two men — to lead you into the fields, not only to

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listen to the pastoral reed, and to hear the bees hum, but to note how you can make the most of the glebe and the vineyard. There is Horace, charming man of the world, who will condole with you feelingly on the loss of your fortune, and by no means undervalue the good things of this life; but who will yet show you that a man may be happy with a *vile modicum* or *parva rura*. There is Shakespeare, who, above all poets, is the mysterious dual of hard sense and empyreal fancy — and a great many more, whom I need not name; but who, if you take to them gently and quietly, will not, like your mere philosopher, your unreasonable stoic, tell you that you have lost nothing; but who will insensibly steal you out of this world, with its losses and crosses, and slip you into another world, before you know where you are! — a world where you are just as welcome, though you carry no more of your lost acres with you than covers the sole of your shoe. Then, for hypochondria and satiety, what is better than a brisk alternative course of travels, — especially early, out-of-the-way, marvellous, legendary travels! How they freshen up the spirits! How they take you out of the humdrum yawning state you are in. See, with Herodotus, young Greece spring up into life; or note with him how already the wondrous old Orient world is crumbling into giant decay; or go with Carpini and Rubruquis to Tartary, meet ‘the carts of Zagathai laden with houses, and think that a great city is travelling towards you.’ Gaze on that vast wild empire of the Tartar, where the descendants of Jenghis ‘multiply and disperse over the immense waste desert, which is as boundless as the ocean.’ Sail with the early northern discoverers, and penetrate to the heart of winter,

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among sea-serpents and bears, and tusked morses, with the faces of men. Then, what think you of Columbus, and the stern soul of Cortes, and the kingdom of Mexico, and the strange gold city of the Peruvians with that audacious brute, Pizarro? and the Polynesians, just for all the world like the ancient Britons? and the American Indians, and the South-Sea Islanders? how petulant, and young, and adventurous, and frisky your hypochondria must get upon a regimen like that! Then, for that vice of the mind which I call sectarianism — not in the religious sense of the word, but little, narrow prejudices, that make you hate your next-door neighbor, because he has his eggs roasted when you have yours boiled; and gossiping and prying into people's affairs, and back-biting, and thinking heaven and earth are coming together, if some broom touch a cobweb that you have let grow over the window-sill of your brains — what like a large and generous, mildly aperient (I beg your pardon, my dear) course of history! How it clears away all the fumes of the head! — better than the hellebore with which the old leeches of the middle ages purged the cerebellum. There, amidst all that great whirl and *sturmbad* (storm-bath), as the Germans say, of kingdoms and empires, and races and ages, how your mind enlarges beyond that little, feverish animosity to John Styles; or that unfortunate prepossession of yours, that all the world is interested in your grievances against Tom Stokes and his wife!

“I can only touch, you see, on a few ingredients in this magnificent pharmacy — its resources are boundless, but require the nicest discretion. I remember to have cured a disconsolate widower who obstinately refused

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every other medicament, by a strict course of geology. I dipped him deep into gneiss and mica schist. Amidst the first strata, I suffered the watery action to expend itself upon cooling crystallized masses; and, by the time I had got him into the tertiary period, amongst the transition chalks of Maestricht, and the conchiferous marls of Gosau, he was ready for a new wife. Kitty, my dear! it is no laughing matter. I made no less notable a cure of a young scholar at Cambridge, who was meant for the Church, when he suddenly caught a cold fit of free thinking, with great shiverings, from wading out of his depth in Spinoza. None of the divines, whom I first tried, did him the least good in that state; so I turned over a new leaf, and doctored him gently upon the chapters of faith in Abraham Tucker's book (you should read it, Sisty); then I threw in strong doses of Fichte; after that I put him on the Scotch metaphysicians, with plunge-baths into certain German transcendentalists; and having convinced him that faith is not an unphilosophical state of mind, and that he might believe without compromising his understanding—for he was mightily conceited on that score—I threw in my divines, which he was now fit to digest; and his theological constitution, since then, has become so robust, that he has eaten up two livings and a deanery! In fact, I have a plan for a library, that, instead of heading its compartments, 'Philology, Natural Science, Poetry,' etc., one shall head them according to the diseases for which they are severally good, bodily and mental, up from a dire calamity, or the pangs of the gout, down to a fit of the spleen or a slight catarrh; for which last your light reading comes in with a whey-posset and barley-water. But," continued

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my father, more gravely, "when some one sorrow, that is yet reparable, gets hold of your mind like a monomania — when you think, because heaven has denied you this or that, on which you had set your heart, that all your life must be a blank — oh ! then diet yourself well on biography — the biography of good and great men. See how little a space one sorrow really makes in life. See scarce a page, perhaps, given to some grief similar to your own ; and how triumphantly the life sails on beyond it ! You thought the wing was broken ! — Tut-tut — it was a bruised feather ! See what life leaves behind it when all is done ! — a summary of positive facts far out of the region of sorrow and suffering, linking themselves with the being of the world. Yes, biography is the medicine here ! . . .

"I have said nothing," resumed my father, slightly bowing his broad temples, "of the Book of Books, for that is the *lignum vitæ*, the cardinal medicine for all. These are but the subsidiaries."

BULWER LYTTON

The Caxtons

IT is chiefly through books that we enjoy intercourse with superior minds ; and these invaluable means of communication are in the reach of all. In the best books, great men talk to us, give us their precious thoughts, and pour their souls into ours. God be thanked for books ! They are the voices of the distant and the dead, and make us heirs of the spiritual life of past ages. Books are the true levellers. They give to all who will faithfully use them, the society, the spiritual presence of the best and greatest of our race. No matter how poor I

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am; no matter though the prosperous of my own time will not enter my obscure dwelling; if the sacred writers will enter and take up their abode under my roof — if Milton will cross my threshold to sing to me of Paradise; and Shakespeare to open to me the worlds of imagination and the workings of the human heart; and Franklin to enrich me with his practical wisdom — I shall not pine for want of intellectual companionship, and I may become a cultivated man, though excluded from what is called the best society in the place where I live.

W. E. CHANNING

Self-culture

A MAN who knows nothing but the history of the passing hour, who knows nothing of the history of the past, but that a certain person whose brain was as vacant as his own occupied the same house as himself, who in a moment of despondency or of gloom has no hope in the morrow because he had read nothing that has taught him that the morrow has any changes — that man, compared with him who has read the most ordinary abridgment of history, or the most common philosophical speculation, is as distinct and different an animal as if he had fallen from some other planet, was influenced by a different organization, working for a different end, and hoping for a different result. It is knowledge that equalizes the social condition of man — that gives to all, however different their political position, passions which are in common, and enjoyments which are universal. Knowledge is like the mystic ladder in the patriarch's dream. Its base rests on the primeval earth — its crest is lost in the shadowy splendor of the empyrean; while

the great authors who for traditionary ages have held the chain of science and philosophy, of poesy and erudition, are the angels ascending and descending the sacred scale, and maintaining, as it were, the communication between man and heaven.

EARL OF BEACONSFIELD

Speech to the Members of the Manchester Athenæum. 1844.

IT is very much more difficult to talk about a thing than to do it. . . . Anybody can make history. Only a great man can write it. . . . The one duty we owe to history is to rewrite it. . . . It is because Humanity has never known where it was going that it has been able to find its way. . . . When man acts, he is a puppet. When he describes, he is a poet. The whole secret lies in that. It was easy enough on the sandy plains by windy Ilium to send the notched arrow from the painted bow, or to hurl against the shield of hide and flamelike brass the long ash-handled spear. It was easy for the adulterous queen to spread the Tyrian carpets for her lord, and then, as he lay couched in the marble bath, to throw over his head the purple net, and call to her smooth-faced lover to stab through the meshes at the heart that should have broken, at Aulis. For Antigone, even with death waiting for her as her bridegroom, it was easy to pass through the tainted air at noon, and climb the hill, and strew with kindly earth the wretched naked corse that had no tomb. But what of those who write about these things? What of those who gave them reality, and made them live forever? Are they not greater than the men and women they sing of? "Hector that sweet knight is dead," and Lucian tells us how in

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the dim underworld Menippus saw the bleaching skull of Helen, and marvelled that it was for so grim a favor that all those honored ships were launched, those beautiful mailed men laid low, those towered cities brought to dust. Yet every day the swanlike daughter of Leda comes out on the battlements, and looks down at the tide of war. The graybeards wonder at her loveliness, and she stands by the side of the king. In his chamber of stained ivory lies her leman. He is polishing his dainty armor, and combing the scarlet plume. With squire and page, her husband passes from tent to tent. She can see his bright hair, and hears, or fancies that she hears, that clear cold voice. In the courtyard below, the son of Priam is buckling on his brazen cuirass. The white arms of Andromache are around his neck. He sets his helmet on the ground, lest their babe should be frightened. Behind the embroidered curtains of his pavilion sits Achilles, in perfumed raiment, while in harness of gilt and silver the friend of his soul arrays himself to go forth to the fight. From a curiously carven chest that his mother Thetis has brought to his shipside, the Lord of the Myrmidons takes out that mystic chalice that the lip of man had never touched, and cleanses it with brimstone, and with fresh water cools it, and, having washed his hands, fills with black wine its burnished hollow, and spills the thick grape-blood upon the ground in honor of Him whom at Dodona bare-footed prophets worshipped, and prays to Him, and knows not that he prays in vain, and that by the hands of two Knights from Troy, Panthus's son, Euphorbus, whose lovelocks were looped with gold, and the Priamid, the lion-hearted, Patroklos, the comrade of comrades, must meet his doom.

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Phantoms, are they? Heroes of mist and mountain? Shadows in a song? No: they are real. Action! What is action? It dies at the moment of the energy. It is a bare concession to fact. The world is made by the singer for the dreamer. . . .

On the mouldering citadel of Troy lies the lizard like a thing of green bronze. The owl has built her nest in the palace of Priam. Over the empty plain wander shepherd and goatherd with their flocks, and where, on the wine-surfaced, oily sea, *οἶνοφ ποντος*, as Homer calls it, copper-pressed and streaked with vermilion, the great galleys of the Danaoi came in their gleaming crescent, the lonely tunney-fisher sits in his little boat and watches the bobbing corks of his net. Yet, every morning the doors of the city are thrown open, and on foot, or in horse-drawn chariot, the warriors go forth to battle, and mock their enemies from behind their iron masks. All day long the fight rages, and when night comes, the torches gleam by the tents, and the crescent burns in the hall. Those who live in marble or on painted panel, know of life but a single exquisite instant, eternal indeed in its beauty, but limited to one note of passion, or one mood of calm. Those whom the past makes live have their myriad emotions of joy and terror, of courage and despair, of pleasure and of suffering. The seasons come and go in glad or saddening pageant, and with winged or leaden feet the years pass before them. They have their youth and their manhood, they are children and they grow old. It is always dawn for St. Helena, as Veronese saw her at the window. Through the still morning air the angels bring her the symbol of God's pain. The cool breezes of the morning lift

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the gilt threads from her brow. On that little hill by the city of Florence, where the lovers of Giorgione are lying, it is always the solstice of noon, of noon made so languorous by summer suns that hardly can the slim naked girl dip into the marble tank the round bubble of clear glass, and the long fingers of the lute-player rest idly upon the chords. It is twilight always for the dancing nymphs whom Corot set free among the silver poplars of France. In eternal twilight they move, those frail diaphanous figures, whose tremulous white feet seem not to touch the dew-drenched grass they tread on. But those who walk in epos, drama, or romance, see through the laboring months the young moons wax and wane, and watch the night from evening unto morning star, and from sunrise unto sunsetting can note the shifting day with all its gold and shadow. For them, as for us, the flowers bloom and wither, and the Earth, that green-tressed Goddess, as Coleridge calls her, alters her raiment for their pleasure. The statue is concentrated to one moment of perfection. The image stained upon the canvas possesses no spiritual element of growth or change. If they know nothing of death, it is because they know little of life, for the secrets of life and death belong to those, and those only, whom the sequence of time affects, and who possess not merely the present but the future, and can rise or fall from a past of glory or of shame. Movement, that problem of the visible arts, can be truly realized by Literature alone. It is Literature that shows us the body in its swiftness and the soul in its unrest.

OSCAR WILDE

Intentions: The Critic as Artist

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READING for pleasure is thus an exercise for the mind. To find that exercise at its best we must seek the best opportunities, and the best opportunities are provided by the best writers. These turn us to a right intercourse with abiding things. They appeal to the best in us and challenge our ability. We must be ready to wrestle with the angel, and not to leave him until we shall have overcome him; and when we shall have overcome him, he will bless us.

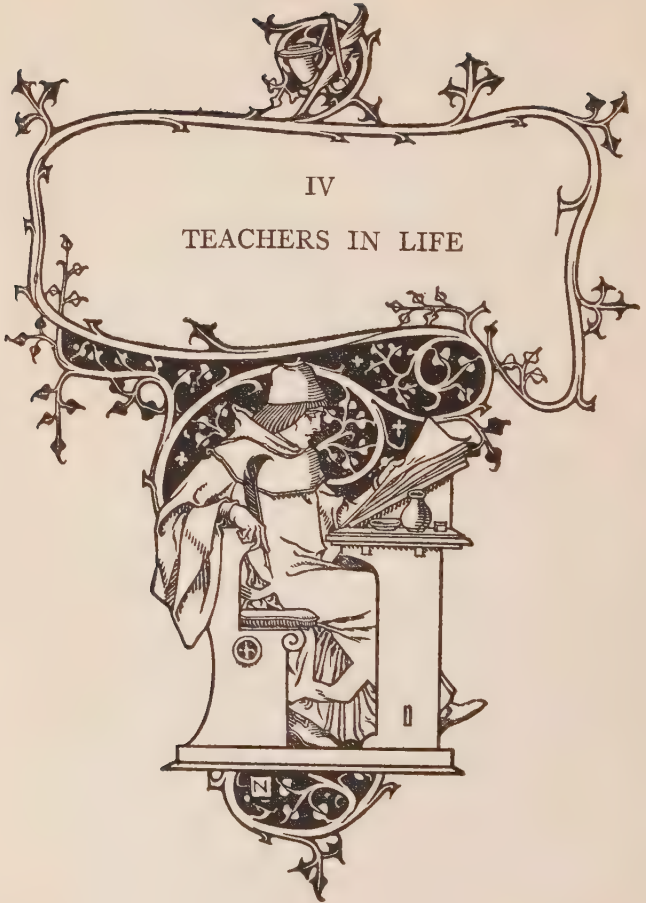
TEMPLE SCOTT
The Pleasure of Reading

IV

TEACHERS IN LIFE

IV

TEACHERS IN LIFE





BOOKS — lighthouses erected in the sea of time.

EDWIN P. WHIPPLE

*REMEMBER that all the known world, excepting only
savage nations, is governed by books.*

VOLTAIRE

Philosophical Dictionary

*BOOKS are the money of Literature, but only the counters
of Science.*

THOMAS HENRY HUXLEY

*IF the crowns of all the kingdoms of the Empire were
laid down at my feet in exchange for my books and my
love of reading, I would spurn them all.*

FÉNELON

*I INDULGE, with all the art I can, my taste for reading.
If I could confine it to valuable books, they are
almost as rare as valuable men.*

LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU

Letters

I HAVE friends whose society is extremely agreeable to me; they are of all ages, and of every country. They have distinguished themselves both in the cabinet and in the field, and obtained high honors for their knowledge of the sciences. It is easy to gain access to them, for they are always at my service, and I admit them to my company, and dismiss them from it, whenever I please. They are never troublesome, but immediately answer every question I ask them. Some relate to me the events of past-ages, while others reveal to me the secrets of Nature. Some teach me how to live, and others how to die. Some, by their vivacity, drive away my cares and exhilarate my spirits; while others give fortitude to my mind and teach me the important lesson how to restrain my desires, and to depend wholly on myself. They open to me, in short, the various avenues of all the arts and sciences, and upon their information I may safely rely in all emergencies. In return for all their services, they only ask me to accommodate them with a convenient chamber in some corner of my humble habitation, where they may repose in peace; for these friends are more delighted by the tranquillity of retirement than with the tumults of society.

PETRARCH

EVERY great book is an action, and every great action is a book.

All who would study with advantage in any art whatsoever, ought to betake themselves to the reading of some sure and certain books oftentimes over; for to read many books produceth confusion, rather than learn-

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ing, like as those who dwell everywhere are not anywhere at home.

MARTIN LUTHER

Table Talk

THE Commerce of Books is much more certain, and much more our own. . . . It comforts me in my Age and Solitude; it eases me of a troublesome Weight of Idleness, and delivers me at all Hours from Company that I dislike; and it blunts the Point of Grievs, if they are not extreme, and have not got an entire Possession of my Soul. To divert myself from a troublesome Fancy, 'tis but to run to my Books; they presently fix me to them and drive the other out of my Thoughts; and do not mutiny to see that I have only recourse to them for want of other more real, natural and lively Conveniences; they always receive me with the same Kindness. . . . The sick Man is not to be lamented, who has his Cure in his Sleeve. In the Experience and Practice of this Sentence, which is a very true one, all the Benefit I reap from Books consists; and yet I make as little use of it almost as those who know it not; I enjoy it as a Miser does his Money, in knowing that I may enjoy it when I please; my Mind is satisfied with this Right of Possession. I never travel without Books, either in Peace or War; and yet sometimes I pass over several Days, and sometimes Months, without looking into them; I will read by and by, say I to myself, or to Morrow, or when I please, and Time steals away without any Inconvenience. For it is not to be imagin'd to what Degree I please myself, and rest content in this Consideration, that I have them by me, to divert myself with them when I am so

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dispos'd, and to call to mind what an Ease and Assistance they are to my Life. 'Tis the best Viaticum I have yet found out for this human Journey, and I very much lament those Men of Understanding who are unprovided of it. And yet I rather accept of any sort of diversion, how light soever, because this can never fail me. When at Home, I a little more frequent my Library, from whence I at once survey all the whole Concerns of my Family: As I enter it, I from thence see under my Garden, Court, and Basecourt, and into all the parts of the Building. There I turn over now one Book, and then another, of various Subjects without Method or Design: One while I meditate, another I record, and dictate as I walk to and fro, such Whimsies, as these with which I here present you. 'Tis in the third Story of a Tower, of which the Ground-Room is my Chapel, the second Story an Apartment with a withdrawing Room and Closet, where I often lie to be more retired. Above it is a great Wardrobe, which formerly was the most useless part of the House. In that Library I pass away most of the Days of my Life, and most of the Hours of the Day. In the Night I am never there. There is within it a Cabinet handsom and neat enough, with a very convenient Fire-place for the Winter, and Windows that afford a great deal of light, and very pleasant Prospects. And were I not more afraid of the Trouble than the Expence, the Trouble that frights me from all Business, I could very easily adjoin on either Side, and on the same Floor, a Gallery of an hundred Paces long, and twelve broad, having found Walls already rais'd for some other design, to the requisite height. Every Place of Retirement requires a Walk. My

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Thoughts sleep if I sit still; my Fancy does not go by itself, my legs must move it; and all those who study without a Book are in the same Condition. The Figure of my Study is round and has no more flat Wall than what is taken up by my Table and Chairs; so that the remaining parts of the Circle present me a View of all my Books at once, set upon five Degrees of Shelves round about me. It has three noble and free Prospects, and is sixteen Paces Diameter. I am not so continually there in Winter; for my Home is built upon an Eminence, as its Name imports, and no part of it is so much expos'd to the Wind and Weather as that, which pleases me the better, for being a painful Access, and a little remote, as well upon the account of Exercise, as being also there more retir'd from the Crowd. 'Tis there that I am in my Kingdom, as we say, and there I endeavor to make myself an absolute Monarch, and to sequester this one Corner from all Society, whether Conjugal, Filial, or Civil. Elsewhere I have but verbal Authority only, and of a confus'd Essence. That Man, in my Opinion, is very miserable, who has not a home, where to be by himself, where to entertain himself alone, or to conceal himself from others. . . .

MICHAEL DE MONTAIGNE
Of Three Commerces

A PRINCE without letters is a pilot without eyes; all his government is groping. In sovereignty it is a most happy thing not to be compelled; but so it is the most miserable not to be counselled. And how can he be counselled that cannot see to read the best counsellors

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(which are books)? for they neither flatter us nor hide from us.

BEN JONSON
Sylva

“BOOKES lookt on as to their Readers or Authours, do at the very first mention, challenge Preheminence above the Worlds admired fine things. Books are the Glasse of Counsell to dress ourselves by. They are life’s best business: Vocation to these hath more Emolument coming in, than all the other busie Termes of life. They are Feelesse Counsellours, no delaying Patrons, of easie Accessee, and kind Expedition, never sending away empty any Client or Petitioner. They are for Company, the best Friends; in doubts, Counsellours; in Damp, Comforters; Time’s Perspective; the home Traveller’s Ship, or Horse, the busie man’s best Recreation, the Opiate of Idle weariness; the mind’s best Ordinary; Nature’s Garden and Seed-plot of Immortality. Time spent (needlessly) from them is consumed, but with them, twice gain’d. Time captivated and snatched from thee, by Incursions of business, Thefts of Visitants, or by thy own Carelesnesse lost, is by these, redeemed in life; they are the soul’s Viaticum; and against death its Cordiall. In a true verdict, no such Treasure as a Library.”

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

*From Introduction to Allibone’s Critical Dictionary of
English Literature*

“THE philosopher Zeno, being demanded on a time by what means a man might attain to happiness, made answer: By resorting to the dead, and having famil-

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iar conversation with them. Intimating thereby the reading of Ancient and Modern Histories, and endeavoring to have such good instructors, as have been observed in our predecessors. A question also was moved by great King Ptolemy, to one of the wise learned Interpreters: In what occasions a King should exercise himself? Whereto this he replied: To know those things which formerly have been done; and to read Books of those matters which offer themselves daily, or are fittest for our instant office." . . .

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Preface to Translation of Boccaccio's Decameron, 1620

BOOKS have always a secret influence on the understanding; we cannot, at pleasure, obliterate ideas: he that reads books of science, though without any fixed desire of improvement, will grow more knowing; he that entertains himself with moral or religious treatises will imperceptibly advance in goodness; the ideas which are often offered to the mind will at last find a lucky moment when it is disposed to receive them.

SAMUEL JOHNSON

The Adventurer, No. 137

THE Diversions of Reading, though they are not always of the strongest Kind, yet they generally Leave a better Effect than the grosser Satisfactions of Sense; For if they are well chosen, they neither dull the Appetite, nor strain the Capacity. On the contrary, they refresh the Inclinations, and strengthen the Power, and improve under Experiment: And which is best of all, they Entertain and Perfect at the same time; and convey Wisdom and Knowledge through Pleasure. By Reading a

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Man does as it were Antedate his Life, and makes himself contemporary with the Ages past. And this way of running up beyond one's Nativity is much better than Plato's Pre-existence; because here a Man knows something of the State, and is the wiser for it; which he is not in the other.

In conversing with Books we may chuse our Company, and disengage without Ceremony or Exception. Here we are free from the Formalities of Custom, and Respect: We need not undergo the Penance of a dull Story, from a Fop of Figure; but may shake off the Haughty, the Impertinent, and the Vain, at Pleasure. Besides, Authors, like Women, commonly Dress when they make a Visit. Respect to themselves makes them polish their Thoughts, and exert the Force of their Understanding more than they would, or can do, in ordinary Conversation: So that the Reader has as it were the Spirit and Essence in a narrow Compass; which was drawn off from a much larger Proportion of Time, Labour, and Expençe. Like an Heir, he is born rather than made Rich, and comes into a Stock of Sense, with little or no Trouble of his own. 'Tis true, a Fortune in Knowledge which Descends in this manner, as well as an inherited Estate, is too often neglected, and squandered away; because we do not consider the Difficulty in Raising it.

Books are a Guide in Youth, and an Entertainment for Age. They support us under Solitude, and keep us from being a Burthen to ourselves. They help us to forget the Crossness of Men and Things; compose our Cares, and our Passions; and lay our Disappointments asleep. When we are weary of the Living, we may repair to the Dead, who have nothing of Peevishness, Pride, or Design, in their Conversation. However, to be constantly in the

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Wheel has neither Pleasure nor Improvement in it. A Man may as well expect to grow stronger by always Eating, as wiser by always Reading. Too much overcharges Nature, and turns more into Disease than Nourishment. 'Tis Thought and Digestion which makes Books serviceable, and gives Health and Vigour to the Mind. Neither ought we to be too Implicit or Resigning to Authorities, but to examine before we Assent, and preserve our Reason in its just Liberties. To walk always upon Crutches, is the way to lose the Use of our Limbs. Such an absolute Submission keeps us in a perpetual Minority, breaks the Spirits of the Understanding, and lays us open to Imposture.

But Books well managed afford Direction and Discovery. They strengthen the Organ, and enlarge the Prospect, and give a more universal Insight into Things, than can be learned from unlettered Observation. He who depends only upon his own Experience has but a few Materials to work upon. He is confined to narrow Limits both of Place and Time: And is not fit to draw a large Model, and to pronounce upon Business which is complicated and unusual. . . . To take Measures wholly from Books, without looking into Men and Business, is like travelling in a Map, where though Countries and Cities are well enough distinguished, yet Villages and private Seats are either Over-looked, or too generally Marked for a Stranger to find. And therefore he that would be a Master, must Draw by the Life, as well as Copy from Originals, and joyn Theory and Experience together.

JEREMY COLLIER

*Essay upon Several Moral Subjects: Of the
Entertainment of Books*

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A GOOD Booke may be a Benefactor representing God Himself.

BENJAMIN WHICHCOTE
Sermons

BUT books have the advantage in many other respects: you may read an able preacher, when you have but a mean one to hear. Every congregation cannot hear the most judicious or powerful preachers; but every single person may read the books of the most powerful and judicious. Preachers may be silenced or banished, when books may be at hand: books may be kept at a smaller charge than preachers: we may choose books which treat of that very subject which we desire to hear of; but we cannot choose what subject the preacher shall treat of. Books we may have at hand every day and hour; when we can have sermons but seldom, and at set times. If sermons be forgotten, they are gone. But a book we may read over and over until we remember it; and, if we forget it, may again peruse it at our pleasure, or at our leisure. So that good books are a very great mercy to the world.

RICHARD BAXTER
Christian Directory, Part I

BECAUSE God hath made the excellent holy writings of his servants the singular blessing of this land and age, and many an one may have a good book even any day or hour of the week, that cannot at all become a good preacher; I advise all God's servants to be thankful for so great a mercy, and to make use of it, and be much in reading; for reading with most doth more conduce to

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knowledge than hearing doth, because you may choose what subjects and the most excellent treatises you please, and may be often at it, and may peruse again and again what you forget, and may take time as you go to fix it on your mind: and with very many it doth more than hearing also to move the heart, though hearing of itself, in this hath the advantage; because lively books may be more easily had, than lively preachers.

RICHARD BAXTER

Christian Directory, Part II

“VISIBLE and tangible products of the Past, again, I reckon-up to the extent of three: Cities, with their Cabinets and Arsenals; then tilled Fields, to either or to both of which divisions Roads with their Bridges may belong; and thirdly — Books. In which third truly, the last invented, lies a worth far surpassing that of the two others. Wondrous indeed is the virtue of a true Book. Not like a dead city of stones, yearly crumbling, yearly needing repair; more like a tilled field, but then a spiritual field: like a spiritual tree, let me rather say, it stands from year to year, and from age to age (we have Books that already number some hundred-and-fifty human ages); and yearly comes its new produce of leaves (Commentaries, Deductions, Philosophical, Political Systems; or were it only Sermons, Pamphlets, Journalistic Essays), every one of which is talismanic and thaumaturgic, for it can persuade men. O thou who art able to write a Book, which once in the two centuries or oftener there is a man gifted to do, envy not him whom they name City-builder, and inexpressibly pity him whom they name Conqueror or City-burner! Thou too art a

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Conqueror and Victor ; but of the true sort, namely over the Devil : thou too hast built what will outlast all marble and metal, and be a wonder-bringing City of the Mind, a Temple and Seminary and Prophetic Mount, whereto all kindreds of the Earth will pilgrim. — Fool ! why journeyest thou wearisomely, in thy antiquarian fervour, to gaze on the stone pyramids of Geeza, or the clay ones of Sacchara ? These stand there, as I can tell thee, idle and inert, looking over the Desert, foolishly enough, for the last three-thousand years : but canst thou not open thy Hebrew BIBLE, then, or even Luther's Version thereof ? ”

THOMAS CARLYLE

Sartor Resartus

ONE cannot celebrate books sufficiently. After saying his best, still something better remains to be spoken in their praise. As with friends, one finds new beauties at every interview, and would stay long in the presence of those choice companions. As with friends, he may dispense with a wide acquaintance. Few and choice. The richest minds need not large libraries. That is a good book which is opened with expectation and closed with profit.

Lord Shaftesbury, writing of the literature of his time, thus happily portrays the qualities of a good book. “No work of wit,” he says, “can be esteemed perfect without that strength and boldness of hand which give it body and proportion. A good piece, the painters say, must have good muscling, as well as coloring and drapery. And surely no writing or discourse of any great moment can seem other than enervated, when neither strong reason, nor antiquity, nor the record of things, nor the natural

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history of man, nor anything which can be called knowledge, dares accompany it except in some ridiculous habit which may give it an air of play and dalliance."

Of books in our time the variety is so voluminous, and they follow so fast from the press, that one must be a swift reader to acquaint himself even with their titles, and wise to discern what are worth the reading. It is a wise book that is good from title-page to the end.

"Were I to be judge and no other to be gratified," says Howell, "I think I should silence whole libraries of authors and reduce the world of books into a parcel; whereas, were another to sit censor, it may be all those I had spared would be condemned to darkness and obtain no exemption from those ruins; and were all to be suppressed which some think unworthy of the light, no more would be left than were before Moses and Trismegistus."

I confess to being drawn rather to the antiques, and turn with a livelier expectancy the dingy leaves, finding often inside the worn covers more for my reading than on the snowy pages of most opened by frequenters at the bookstores. I fancy that I am guided by a selecting instinct to lay my hand upon the very volume that had long been seeking my acquaintance. There are patterns of bindings, moreover, that insure wise contents, wisdom being not less an ancient than contemporary, and retains the physiognomy of its times. One may remember that time gathers and preserves the best along with the worthless, and the selection is thus the wider. And time must determine those of modern date which may attain immortality. The fewest of any period will hardly be remembered beyond their authors' life-time; and how large the number that never gain general perusal.

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An author who sets his reader on sounding the depths of his own thoughts serves him best, and at the same time teaches the modesty of authorship.

The more life embodied in the book, the more companionable. Like a friend, the volume salutes one pleasantly at every opening of its leaves, and entertains; we close it with charmed memories, and come again and again to the entertainment. The books that charmed us in youth recall the delight ever afterwards; we are hardly persuaded there are any like them, any deserving equally our affections. Fortunate if the best fall in our way during this susceptible and forming period of our lives.

I value books for their suggestiveness even more than for the information they may contain, works that may be taken in hand and laid aside, read at moments, containing sentences that quicken my thoughts and prompt to following these into their relations with life and things. I am stimulated and exalted by the perusal of books of this kind, and should esteem myself fortunate if I might add another to the few which the world shall take to its affections.

A. BRONSON ALCOTT

Table Talk

THE use of literature is to afford us a platform whence we may command a view of our present life, a purchase by which we may move it. We fill ourselves with ancient learning; install ourselves the best we can in Greek, in Punic, in Roman houses, only that we may wiselier see French, English, and American houses and modes of living.

Therefore we value the poet. All the argument, and

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all the wisdom, is not in the encyclopedia, or the treatise on metaphysics, or the Body of Divinity, but in the sonnet or the play. In my daily work I incline to repeat my old steps, and do not believe in remedial force, in the power of change and reform. But some Petrarch or Ariosto, filled with the new wine of his imagination, writes me an ode, or a brisk romance, full of daring thought and action. He smites and arouses me with his shrill tones, breaks up my whole chain of habits, and I open my eye on my own possibilities. He claps wings to the sides of all the solid old lumber of the world, and I am capable once more of choosing a straight path in theory and practice.

R. W. EMERSON

Essays: Circles

IF I were to pray for a taste which should stand me in stead, under every variety of circumstances, and be a source of happiness and cheerfulness to me through life, and a shield against its ills, however things might go amiss, and the world frown upon me, it would be a taste for reading. I speak of it of course only as a worldly advantage, and not in the slightest degree as superseding or derogating from the higher office and surer and stronger panoply of religious principles — but as a taste, an instrument and a mode of pleasurable gratification. Give a man this taste, and the means of gratifying it, and you can hardly fail of making a happy man, unless, indeed, you put into his hands a most perverse selection of books. You place him in contact with the best society in every period of history, — with the wisest, the wittiest, — with the tenderest, the bravest, and the purest characters who

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have adorned humanity. You make him a denizen of all nations — a contemporary of all ages. The world has been created for him. It is hardly possible but the character should take a higher and better tone from the constant habit of associating in thought with a class of thinkers, to say the least of it, above the average of humanity. It is morally impossible but that the manners should take a tinge of good breeding and civilization from having constantly before one's eyes the way in which the best-bred and the best-informed men have talked and conducted themselves in their intercourse with each other. There is a gentle, but perfectly irresistible coercion in a habit of reading well directed over the whole tenor of a man's character and conduct, which is not the less effectual because it works insensibly, and because it is really the last thing he dreams of. It cannot, in short, be better summed up than in the words of the Latin poet —

“*Emollit mores, nec sinit esse feros.*”

It civilizes the conduct of men — and *suffers* them not to remain barbarous.

SIR JOHN HERSCHEL

Address at Windsor Public Library

“WILL you let me look at the book?”

“Yes, dear, that I will, if you promise me not to run away with it.”

I took the book from her hand; a short, thick volume, at least a century old, bound with greasy black leather. I turned the yellow and dog's-eared pages, reading here and there a sentence. Yes, and no mistake! *His* pen, his style, his spirit might be observed in every line of

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the uncouth-looking old volume—the air, the style, the spirit of the writer of the book which first taught me to read. I covered my face with my hand and thought of my childhood.

“This is a singular book,” said I at last; “but it does not appear to have been written to prove that thieving is no harm, but rather to show the terrible consequences of crime; it contains a deep moral.”

“A deep what, dear?”

“A — but no matter, I will give you a crown for this volume.”

“No, dear, I will not sell the volume for a crown.”

“I am poor,” said I; “but I will give you two silver crowns for your volume.”

“No, dear, I will not sell my volume for two silver crowns; no, nor for the golden one in the King’s tower down there; without my book I should mope and pine, and perhaps fling myself into the river; but I am glad you like it, which shows that I was right about you, after all; you are one of our party, and you have a flash about that eye of yours which puts me just in mind of my dear son. No, dear, I won’t sell you my book; but if you like, you may have a peep into it whenever you come this way. I shall be glad to see you; you are one of the right sort, for if you had been a common one, you would have run away with the thing; but you scorn such behavior, and, as you are so flush of your money, though you say you are poor, you may give me a tanner to buy a little baccy with; I love baccy, dear, more by token that it comes from the plantations to which the blessed woman was sent.”

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"Well, mother," said I, "how are you?" The old woman lifted her head with a startled look.

"Don't you know me?" said I.

"Yes, I think I do. Ah, yes," said she, as her features beamed with recollection, "I know you, dear; you are the young lad that gave me the tanner. Well, child, got anything to sell?"

"Nothing at all," said I.

"Bad luck?"

"Yes," said I, "bad enough, and ill-usage."

"Ah, I suppose they caught ye; well, child, never mind, better luck next time; I am glad to see you."

"Thank you," said I, sitting down on the stone bench. . . . "Where's the book?"

The apple-woman shook more violently than before, bent herself down, and drew her cloak more closely about her than before. "Book, child, what book?"

"Why, blessed Mary, to be sure."

"Oh, that; I han't got it, child — I have lost it, have left it at home."

"Lost it," said I; "left it at home — what do you mean? Come, let me have it."

"I han't got it, child."

"I believe you have got it under your cloak."

"Don't tell any one, dear; don't — don't," and the apple-woman burst into tears.

"What's the matter with you?" said I, staring at her.

"You want to take my book from me?"

"Not I. I care nothing about it; keep it, if you like, only tell me what's the matter?"

"Why, all about that book."

"The book?"

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“Yes, they wanted to take it from me.”

“Who did?”

“Why, some wicked boys. I’ll tell you all about it. Eight or ten days ago, I sat behind my stall, reading my book; all of a sudden I felt it snatched from my hand; up I started, and see three rascals of boys grinning at me; one of them held the book in his hand. ‘What book is this?’ said he, grinning at it. ‘What do you want with my book?’ said I, clutching at it over my stall; ‘give me my book.’ ‘What do you want a book for?’ said he, holding it back; ‘I have a good mind to fling it into the Thames.’ ‘Give me my book,’ I shrieked; and, snatching at it, I fell over my stall, and all my fruit was scattered about. Off ran the boys — off ran the rascal with my book. Oh dear, I thought I should have died; up I got, however, and ran after them as well as I could; I thought of my fruit, but I thought more of my book. ‘My book! my book!’ I shrieked, ‘murder! theft! robbery!’ I was near being crushed under the wheels of a cart; but I didn’t care — I followed the rascals. ‘Stop them! stop them!’ I ran nearly as fast as they — they couldn’t run very fast on account of the crowd. At last some one stopped the rascal, whereupon he turned round, and flinging the book at me, it fell into the mud; well, I picked it up, and kissed it, all muddy as it was. ‘Has he robbed you?’ said the man. ‘Robbed me, indeed; why, he had got my book!’ ‘Oh, your book,’ said the man, and laughed, and let the rascal go. Ah, he might laugh, but —”

“Well, go on.”

“My heart beats so. Well, I went back to my booth and picked up my stall and my fruits, what I could find

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of them. I couldn't keep my stall for two days I got such a fright, and when I got round, I couldn't bide the booth where the thing had happened, so I came over to the other side. . . . Would you like to look at the book?"

"Well, I think I should."

"Honor bright?" said the apple-woman, looking me in the eyes.

"Honor bright," said I, looking the apple-woman in the eyes.

"Well then, dear, here it is," said she, taking it from under her cloak; "read it as long as you like, only get a little farther into the booth. Don't sit so near the edge — you might —"

I went deep into the booth, and the apple-woman, bringing her chair round, almost confronted me. I commenced reading the book, and was soon engrossed by it; hours passed away, once or twice I lifted my eyes, the apple-woman was still confronting me; at last my eyes began to ache, whereupon I returned the book to the apple-woman, and giving her another tanner, walked away.

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After a pause, the old woman said to me, "I believe, dear, that it is the blessed book you brought me which has wrought this goodly change. How glad I am now that I can read; but oh what a difference between the book you brought to me and the one you took away. I believe the one you brought is written by the finger of God, and the other by —"

"Don't abuse the book," said I, "it is an excellent book for those who can understand it; it was not exactly suited to you, and perhaps it had been better had you

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never read it — and yet — who knows? Peradventure, if you had not read that book, you would not have been fitted for the perusal of the one which you say is written by the finger of God;” and, pressing my hand to my head, I fell into a deep fit of musing. “What, after all,” thought I, “if there should be more order and system in the working of the moral world than I have thought? Does there not seem in the present instance to be something like the working of a Divine hand? I could not conceive why this woman, better educated than her mother, should have been, as she certainly was, a worse character than her mother. Yet perhaps this woman may be better and happier than her mother ever was, perhaps she is so already — perhaps this world is not a wild, lying dream, as I have occasionally supposed it to be.” . . .

“Farewell, child,” said the old woman, “and God bless you.”

GEORGE BORROW

Lavengro, Chapters 31, 40, and 52

THE great consulting room of a wise man is a library. When I am in perplexity about life, I have but to come here, and, without fee or reward, I commune with the wisest souls that God has blest the world with. If I want a discourse on immortality, Plato comes to my help. If I want to know the human heart, Shakespeare opens all its chambers. Whatever be my perplexity or doubt, I know exactly the great man to call to me, and he comes in the kindest way; he listens to my doubts and tells me his convictions. So that a library may be regarded as the solemn chamber in which a man can take counsel with all that have been wise and great and good and

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glorious amongst the men that have gone before him. If we come down for a moment and look at the bare and immediate utilities of a library, we find that here a man gets himself ready for his calling, arms himself for his profession, finds out the facts that are to determine his trade, prepares himself for his examination. The utilities of it are endless and priceless. It is too a place of pastime; for man has no amusement more innocent, more sweet, more gracious, more elevating, and more fortifying than he can find in a library. If he be fond of books, his fondness will discipline him as well as amuse him. . . .

I go into my library as to a hermitage — and it is one of the best hermitages the world has. What matters the scoff of the fool when you are safely amongst the great men of the past? How little of the din of this stupid world enters into a library, how hushed are the foolish voices of the world's hucksterings, barterings, and bickerings! How little the scorn of high or low, or the mad cries of party spirit can touch the man who in this best hermitage of human life draws around him the quietness of the dead and the solemn sanctities of ancient thought! Thus, whether I take it as a question of utility, of pastime, or of high discipline I find the library — with but one or two exceptions — the most blessed place that man has fashioned or framed. The man who is fond of books is usually a man of lofty thought, of elevated opinions. A library is the strengthener of all that is great in life and the repeller of what is petty and mean; and half the gossip of society would perish if the books that are truly worth reading were but read.

GEORGE DAWSON

Address at Birmingham Free Library

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A BOOK is essentially not a talked thing, but a written thing; and written, not with a view of mere communication, but of permanence. The book of talk is printed only because its author cannot speak to thousands of people at once; if he could, he would: the volume is mere multiplication of his voice. You cannot talk to your friend in India; if you could, you would; you write instead: that is mere conveyance of voice. But a book is written, not to multiply the voice merely, not to carry it merely, but to perpetuate it. The author has something to say which he perceives to be true and useful, or helpfully beautiful. So far as he knows, no one else can say it. He is bound to say it, clearly and melodiously if he may; clearly, at all events. In the sum of his life he finds this to be the thing, or group of things, manifest to him;—this, the piece of true knowledge, or sight, which his share of sunshine and earth has permitted him to seize. He would fain set it down forever; engrave it on rock, if he could; saying, “This is the best of me; for the rest, I ate, and drank, and slept, loved, and hated, like another; my life was as the vapor, and is not; but this I saw and knew: this, if anything of mine, is worth your memory.” That is his “writing”; it is, in his small human way, and with whatever degree of true inspiration is in him, his inscription, or scripture. That is a “Book.”

Now, books of this kind have been written in all ages by their greatest men, — by great readers, great statesmen, and great thinkers. These are all at your choice; and Life is short. You have heard as much before; — yet, have you measured and mapped out this short life and its possibilities? Do you know, if you read this,

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that you cannot read that — that what you lose to-day you cannot gain to-morrow? Will you go and gossip with your housemaid, or your stable-boy, when you may talk with queens and kings; or flatter yourselves that it is with any worthy consciousness of your own claims to respect, that you jostle with the hungry and common crowd for entree here, and audience there, when all the while this eternal court is open to you, with its society, wide as the world, multitudinous as its days, the chosen, and the mighty, of every place and time? Into that you may enter always; in that you may take fellowship and rank according to your wish; from that, once entered into it, you can never be an outcast but by your own fault; by your aristocracy of companionship there, your own inherent aristocracy will be assuredly tested, and the motives with which you strive to take high place in the society of the living, measured, as to all the truth and sincerity that are in them, by the place you desire to take in this company of the Dead.

“The place you desire,” and the place you fit yourself for, I must also say; because, observe, this court of the past differs from all living aristocracy in this: it is open to labor and to merit, but to nothing else. No wealth will bribe, no name overawe, no artifice deceive, the guardian of those Elysian gates. In the deep sense, no vile or vulgar person ever enters there. At the portières of that silent Faubourg St. Germain, there is but brief question: “Do you deserve to enter? Pass. Do you ask to be the companion of nobles? Make yourself noble, and you shall be. Do you long for the conversation of the wise? Learn to understand it, and you shall hear it. But on other terms? — no. If you will

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not rise to us, we cannot stoop to you. The living Lord may assume courtesy, the living philosopher explain his thought to you with considerate pain; but here we neither feign nor interpret; you must rise to the level of our thoughts if you would be gladdened by them, and share our feelings if you would recognize our presence."

This, then, is what you have to do, and I admit that it is much. You must, in a word, love these people, if you are to be among them. No ambition is of any use. They scorn your ambition. You must love them, and show your love in these two following ways:—

First, by a true desire to be taught by them, and to enter into their thoughts. To enter into theirs, observe; not to find your own expressed by them. If the person who wrote the book is not wiser than you, you need not read it; if he be, he will think differently from you in many respects.

Very ready we are to say of a book, "How good this is — that's exactly what I think!" But the right feeling is: "How strange that is! I never thought of that before, and yet I see it is true; or if I do not now, I hope I shall, some day." But whether thus submissively or not, at least be sure that you go to the author to get at his meaning, not to find yours. Judge it afterwards if you think yourself qualified to do so; but ascertain it first. And be sure also, if the author is worth anything, that you will not get at his meaning all at once; — nay, that at his whole meaning you will not for a long time arrive in any wise. Not that he does not say what he means, and in strong words too; but he cannot say it all; and what is more strange, will not, but in a hidden way and

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in parable, in order that he may be sure you want it. I cannot quite see the reason of this, nor analyze that cruel reticence in the breasts of wise men which makes them always hide their deeper thought. They do not give it you by way of help, but of reward; and will make themselves sure that you deserve it before they allow you to reach it. But it is the same with the physical type of wisdom, gold. There seems, to you and me, no reason why the electric forces of the earth should not carry whatever there is of gold within it at once to the mountain tops, so that kings and people might know that all the gold they could get was there; and without any trouble of digging, or anxiety, or chance, or waste of time, cut it away, and coin as much as they needed. But Nature does not manage it so. She puts it in little fissures in the earth, nobody knows where; you may dig long and find none; you must dig painfully to find any.

And it is just the same with men's best wisdom. When you come to a good book, you must ask yourself, "Am I inclined to work as an Australian miner would? Are my pickaxes and shovels in good order, and am I in good trim myself, my sleeves well up to the elbow, and my breath good, and my temper?" And, keeping the figure a little longer, even at cost of tiresomeness, for it is a thoroughly useful one, the metal you are in search of being the author's mind or meaning, his words are as the rock which you have to crush and smelt in order to get at it. And your pickaxes are your own care, wit, and learning; your smelting furnace is your own thoughtful soul. Do not hope to get at any good author's meaning without those tools and that fire; often you will need

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sharpest, finest chiselling, and patientest fusing, before you can gather one grain of the metal.

JOHN RUSKIN
Sesame and Lilies

REPEATING our inquiry, what, then, do we mean by real literature? especially the American literature of the future? Hard questions to meet. The clews are inferential, and turn us to the past. At best, we can only offer suggestions, comparisons, circuits.

It must still be reiterated, as, for the purpose of these memoranda, the deep lesson of history and time, that all else in the contributions of a nation or age, through its politics, materials, heroic personalities, military éclat, etc., remains crude, and defers, in any close and thorough-going estimate, until vitalized by national, original archetypes in literature. They only put the nation in form, finally tell anything — prove, complete anything — perpetuate anything. Without doubt, some of the richest and most powerful and populous communities of the antique world, and some of the grandest personalities and events, have, to after and present times, left themselves entirely unbequeath'd. Doubtless, greater than any that have come down to us, were among those lands, heroisms, persons, that have not come down to us at all, even by name, date, or location. Others have arrived safely, as from voyages over wide, century stretching seas. The little ships, the miracles that have buoy'd them, and by incredible chances safely convey'd them (or the best of them, their meaning and essence) over long wastes, darkness, lethargy, ignorance, etc., have been a few inscriptions — a few immortal

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compositions, small in size, yet compassing what measureless values of reminiscence, contemporary portraitures, manners, idioms and beliefs, with deepest inference, hint and thought, to tie and touch forever the old, new body, and the old, new soul! These! and still these! bearing the freight so dear — dearer than pride — dearer than love. All the best experience of humanity, folded, saved, freighted to us here. Some of these tiny ships we call Old and New Testament, Homer, Æschylus, Plato, Juvenal, etc. Precious minims! I think, if we were forced to choose, rather than have you, and the likes of you, and what belongs to, and has grown of you, blotted out and gone, we could better afford, appalling as that would be, to lose all actual ships, this day fasten'd by wharf, or floating on wave, and see them, with all their cargoes, scuttled and sent to the bottom.

WALT WHITMAN
Democratic Vistas

WHEN a man loves books, he has in him that which will console him under many sorrows and strengthen him in various trials. Such a love will keep him at home, and make his time pass pleasantly. Even when visited by bodily or mental affliction, he can resort to this book-love and be cured. . . . And when a man is at home and happy with a book, sitting by his fireside, he must be a churl if he does not communicate that happiness. Let him read now and then to his wife and children. Those thoughts will grow and take root in the hearts of the listeners. Good scattered about is indeed the seed of the sower. A man who feels sympathy with

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what is good and noble is, at the time he feels that sympathy good and noble himself.

To a poor man book-love is not only a consoling preservative, but often a source of happiness, power, and wealth. It lifts him from the mechanical drudgery of the day. It takes him away from bad companions, and gives him the close companionship of a good and fine-thinking man; for, while he is reading Bacon or Shakespeare, he is talking with Bacon or Shakespeare. While his body is resting, his mind is working and growing. . . .

JAMES HAIN FRISWELL

The Gentle Life: On Book Love

THE love of books is a love which requires neither justification, apology, nor defence. It is a good thing in itself: a possession to be thankful for, to rejoice over, to be proud of, and to sing praises for. With this love in his heart no man is ever poor, ever without friends, or the means of making his life lovely, beautiful, and happy. In prosperity or adversity, in joy or sorrow, in health or sickness, in solitude or crowded towns, books are never out of place, never without the power to comfort, console, and bless. They add wealth to prosperity, and make sweeter the sweet uses of adversity; they intensify joy and take the sting from, or give a bright relief to sorrow; they are the glorifiers of health and the blessed consolers of sickness; they people solitude with the creations of thought, the children of fancy, and the offsprings of imagination, and to the busy haunts of men they lend a purpose and an aim, and tend to keep the heart unspotted in the world. It is better to possess this love than to inherit a kingdom, for it brings wealth which

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money can never buy, and which power is impotent to secure. It is better than gold, "yea, than much find gold," and splendid palaces and costly raiment. No possession can surpass, or even equal, a good library to the lover of books. Here are treasured up for his daily use and delectation riches which increase by being consumed, and pleasures which never cloy. It is a realm as large as the universe, every part of which is peopled by spirits who lay before his feet their precious spoils as his lawful tribute. For him the poets sing, the philosophers discourse, the historians unfold the wonderful march of life, and the searches of nature reveal the secrets and mysteries of creation. No matter what his rank or position may be, the lover of books is the richest and the happiest of the children of men. . . .

The only true equalizers in the world are books; the only treasure-house open to all comers is a library; the only wealth which will not decay is knowledge; the only jewel which you can carry beyond the grave is wisdom. To live in this equality, to share in these treasures, to possess this wealth, and to secure this jewel may be the happy lot of every one. All that is needed for the acquisition of these inestimable treasures is, the love of books. . . .

As friends and companions, as teachers and consolers, as recreators and amusers books are always with us, and always ready to respond to our wants. We can take them with us in our wanderings, or gather them around us at our firesides. In the lonely wilderness, and the crowded city, their spirit will be with us, giving a meaning to the seemingly confused movements of humanity, and peopling the desert with their own bright creations. Without

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the love of books the richest man is poor; but endowed with this treasure of treasures, the poorest man is rich. He has wealth which no power can diminish; riches which are always increasing; possessions which the more he scatters the more they accumulate; friends who never desert him, and pleasures which never cloy.

J. A. LANGFORD
The Praise of Books

Cellini's Autobiography ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

A BOOK which the great Goethe thought worthy of translating into German with the pen of *Faust* and *Wilhelm Meister*, a book which Auguste Comte placed upon his very limited list for the perusal of reformed humanity, is one with which we have the right to be occupied, not once or twice, but over and over again. It cannot lose its freshness. What attracted the encyclopædic minds of men so different as Comte and Goethe to its pages still remains there. This attractive or compulsive quality, to put the matter briefly, is the flesh and blood reality of Cellini's self-delineation. A man stands before us in his *Memoirs* unsophisticated, unembellished, with all his native faults upon him, and with all his potent energies portrayed in the veracious manner of Velasquez, with bold strokes and animated play of light and color. No one was less introspective than this child of the Italian Renaissance. No one was less occupied with thoughts about thinking or with the presentation of psychological experience. Vain, ostentatious, self-laudatory, and self-engrossed as Cellini was, he never stopped to analyze himself. He attempted no artistic blending of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*; the

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word "confessions" could not have escaped his lips; a *Journal Intime* would have been incomprehensible to his fierce, virile spirit. His autobiography is the record of action and passion. Suffering, enjoying, enduring, working with restless activity; hating, loving, hovering from place to place as impulse moves him; the man presents himself dramatically by his deeds and spoken words, never by his ponderings or meditative broodings. It is this healthy externality which gives its great charm to Cellini's self-portrayal and renders it an imperishable document for the student of human nature.

In addition to these solid merits, his life, as Horace Walpole put it, is "more amusing than any novel." We have a real man to deal with—a man so realistically brought before us that we seem to hear him speak and see him move; a man, moreover, whose eminently characteristic works of art in a great measure still survive among us. Yet the adventures of this potent human actuality will bear comparison with those of Gil Blas, or the Comte de Monte Cristo, or Quentin Durward, or Les Trois Mousquetaires, for their variety and ever pungent interest.

In point of language, again, Cellini possesses an advantage which places him at least upon the level of the most adroit romance-writers. Unspoiled by literary training, he wrote precisely as he talked, with all the sharp wit of a born Florentine, heedless of grammatical construction, indifferent to rhetorical effects, attaining unsurpassable vividness of narration by pure simplicity. He was greatly helped in gaining the peculiar success he has achieved by two circumstances; first, that he dictated nearly the whole of his *Memoirs* to a young

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amanuensis; secondly, that the distinguished academical writer to whose correction he submitted them refused to spoil their ingenuous grace by alterations or stylistic improvements. While reading his work, therefore, we enjoy something of that pleasure which draws the folk of Eastern lands to listen to the recitation of Arabian Nights' entertainments.

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

Introduction to Cellini's Autobiography

THE most influential books, and the truest in their influence, are works of fiction. They do not pin the reader to a dogma which he must afterwards discover to be inexact; they do not teach him a lesson, which he must afterwards unlearn. They repeat, they rearrange, they classify the lessons of life; they disengage us from ourselves, they constrain us to the acquaintance of others; and they show us the web of experience, not as we can see it for ourselves, but with a singular change — that monstrous, consuming *ego* of ours being, for the nonce, struck out. To be so, they must be reasonably true to the human comedy; and any work that is so serves the turn of instruction. But the course of our education is answered best by those poems and romances where we breathe a magnanimous atmosphere of thought and meet generous and pious characters. Shakespeare has served me best. Few living friends have had upon me an influence so strong for good as Hamlet or Rosalind. . . . Kent's brief speech over the dying Lear had a great effect upon my mind, and was the burthen of my reflections for long, so profoundly, so touchingly generous did it appear in sense, so overpowering in expression.

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Perhaps my dearest and best friend outside of Shakespeare is D'Artagnan — the elderly D'Artagnan of the *Vicomte de Bragelonne*. I know not a more human soul, nor, in his way a finer. I shall be very sorry for the man who is so much of a pedant in morals that he cannot learn from the Captain of Musketeers. Lastly, I must name the *Pilgrim's Progress*, a book that breathes of every beautiful and valuable emotion.

But of works of art little can be said; their influence is profound and silent, like the influence of nature; they mould by contact; we drink them up like water, and are bettered, yet know not how. It is in books more specifically didactic that we can follow out the effect, and distinguish and weigh and compare. A book which has been very influential upon me fell early into my hands, and so may stand first, though I think its influence was only sensible later on, and perhaps still keeps growing, for it is a book not easily outlived: the *Essais* of Montaigne. That temperate and genial picture of life is a great gift to place in the hands of persons of to-day; they will find in these smiling pages a magazine of heroism and wisdom, all of an antique strain; they will have their "linen decencies" and excited orthodoxies fluttered, and will (if they have any gift of reading) perceive that these have not been fluttered without some excuse and ground of reason; and (again if they have any gift of reading) they will end by seeing that this old gentleman was in a dozen ways a finer fellow, and held in a dozen ways a nobler view of life, than they or their contemporaries.

The next book, in order of time, to influence me, was the New Testament, and in particular the Gospel ac-

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according to St. Matthew. I believe it would startle and move any one if they could make a certain effort of imagination and read it freshly like a book, not droningly and dully like a portion of the Bible. Any one would then be able to see in it those truths which we are all courteously supposed to know and all modestly refrain from applying. But upon this subject it is perhaps better to be silent.

I come next to Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, a book of singular service, a book which tumbled the world upside down for me, blew into space a thousand cobwebs of genteel and ethical illusion, and, having thus shaken my tabernacle of lies, set me back again upon a strong foundation of all the original and manly virtues. But it is, once more, only a book for those who have the gift of reading. I will be very frank — I believe it is so with all good books except, perhaps, fiction. The average man lives, and must live, so wholly in convention, that gunpowder charges of the truth are more apt to discompose than to invigorate his creed. Either he cries out upon blasphemy and indecency, and crouches the closer round that little idol of part-truths and part-conveniences which is the contemporary deity, or he is convinced by what is new, forgets what is old, and becomes truly blasphemous and indecent himself. New truth is only useful to supplement the old; rough truth is only wanted to expand, not to destroy, our civil and often elegant conventions. He who cannot judge had better stick to fiction and the daily papers. There he will get little harm, and, in the first at least, some good.

R. L. STEVENSON

Books which have influenced Me

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IN the first place, when we speak about books, let us avoid the extravagance of expecting too much from books, the pedant's habit of extolling books as synonymous with education. Books are no more education than laws are virtue; and just as profligacy is easy within the strict limits of law, a boundless knowledge of books may be found with a narrow education. A man may be, as the poet saith, "deep vers'd in books, and shallow in himself." We need to know in order that we may feel rightly and act wisely. The thirst after truth itself may be pushed to a degree where indulgence enfeebles our sympathies and unnerves us in action. Of all men perhaps the book-lover needs most to be reminded that man's business here is to know for the sake of living, not to live for the sake of knowing.

FREDERIC HARRISON
The Choice of Books

I MUST confess that I like all memoirs. I like them for their form, just as much as for their matter. In literature mere egotism is delightful. It is what fascinates us in the letters of personalities so different, as Cicero and Balzac, Flaubert and Berlioz, Byron and Madame de Sévigné. Whenever we come across it, and, strangely enough, it is rather rare, we cannot but welcome it, and do not easily forget it. Humanity will always love Rousseau for having confessed his sins, not to a priest, but to the world, and the couchant nymphs that Cellini wrought in bronze for the castle of King Francis, the green and gold Perseus, even, that in the open Loggia at Florence shows the moon the dead terror that once

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turned life to stone, have not given it more pleasure than has that autobiography in which the supreme scoundrel of the Renaissance relates the story of his splendor and his shame. The opinions, the character, the achievements of the man, matter very little. He may be a sceptic like the gentle *Sieur de Montaigne*, or a saint like the bitter son of *Monica*, but when he tells us his own secrets he can always charm our ears to listening and our lips to silence. The mode of thought that Cardinal Newman represented — if that can be called a mode of thought which seeks to solve intellectual problems by a denial of the supremacy of intellect — may not, cannot, I think, survive. But the world will never weary of watching that troubled soul in its progress from darkness to darkness. The lonely church at Littlemore, where “the breath of the morning is damp, and worshippers are few,” will always be dear to it, and whenever men see the yellow snapdragon blossoming on the wall of Trinity, they will think of that gracious undergraduate who saw in the flower’s sure recurrence a prophecy that he would abide forever with the Benign Mother of his days — a prophecy that Faith, in her wisdom or her folly, suffered not to be fulfilled. Yes; autobiography is irresistible. Poor, silly, conceited Mr. Secretary Pepys has chattered his way into the circle of the Immortals, and, conscious that indiscretion is the better part of valor, bustles about among them in that “shaggy purple gown with gold buttons and looped lace” which he is so fond of describing to us, perfectly at his ease, and prattling, to his own and our infinite pleasure, of the Indian blue petticoat that he bought for his wife, of the “good hog’s harslet,” and the “pleasant French

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fricassee of veal" that he loved to eat, of his game of bowls with Will Joyce, and his "gadding after beauties," and his reciting of *Hamlet* on a Sunday, and his playing of the viol on week days, and other wicked or trivial things. Even in actual life egotism is not without its attractions. When people talk to us about others, they are usually dull. When they talk to us about themselves, they are nearly always interesting, and if one could shut them up, when they become wearisome, as easily as one can shut up a book of which one has grown wearied, they would be perfect absolutely.

OSCAR WILDE

Intentions: The Critic as Artist

DO read good books. . . . The best books are few; to know them is a joy that does not perish. Knowing them, you can at all times enter the haunted country, and find your favorite places, and be at rest with that which is perfect, make acquaintance with the masters, with the immortals. There are no such good friends as they are.

ANDREW LANG

"Books that have helped Me" (The Forum, June, 1887)

INTIMATE communion with the minds of the wisest and most gifted of our race — the kings of thought — rarely fails to bring with it, not merely patience and hope wherewith to meet the unavoidable cares and disappointments of life, but also fortitude to bear even its worst calamities.

ALEXANDER IRELAND

Preface to The Book-lover's Enchiridion, 1888

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BOOKS! those miraculous memories of high thoughts and golden moods; those silver shells, tremulous with the wonderful secrets of the ocean of life; those love-letters that pass from hand to hand of a thousand lovers that never meet; those honey-combs of dreams; those orchards of knowledge; those still-beating hearts of the noble dead; those mysterious signals that beckon along the darksome pathways of the past; voices through which the myriad lisping of the earth find perfect speech; oracles through which its mysteries call like voices in moonlit woods; prisms of beauty; urns stored with all the sweets of all the summers of time; immortal night-ingales that sing forever to the rose of life — Books, Bibles — ah me! what have ye become to-day!

RICHARD LE GALLIENNE
Limited Editions. A Prose Fancy

BOOKS are not the products of accident and caprice. As Goethe said, if you would understand an author, you must understand his age. The same thing is just as true of a book. If you would fully comprehend it, you must know the age. There is an order; there are causes and relations between great compositions and the societies in which they have emerged. Just as the naturalist strives to understand and to explain the distribution of plants and animals over the surface of the globe, to connect their presence or their absence with the great geological, climatic, and oceanic changes, so the student of literature, if he be wise, undertakes an ordered and connected survey of ideas, of tastes, of sentiments, of imagination, of humor, of invention, as they affect and as they are affected by

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the ever changing experiences of human nature, and the manifold variations that time and circumstances are incessantly working in human society.

LORD MORLEY

On the Study of Literature

I AM not going to preach to you any artificial stoicism. I am not going to preach to you any indifference to money, or to the pleasures of social intercourse, or to the esteem and good-will of our neighbors, or to any other of the consolations and necessities of life. But, after all, the thing that matters most, both for happiness and for duty, is that we should strive habitually to live with wise thoughts and right feelings. Literature helps us more than our studies to this most blessed companionship of wise thoughts and right feelings.

LORD MORLEY

On the Study of Literature

MERE scholarship and learning and the knowledge of books do not by any means arrest and dissolve all the travelling acids of the human system. Nor would I pretend for a moment that literature can be any substitute for life and action. Burke said, "What is the education of the generality of the world? Reading a parcel of books? No! Restraint and discipline, examples of virtue and of justice, these are what form the education of the world." That is profoundly true, it is life that is the great education. But the parcel of books, if they are well chosen, reconcile us to this discipline;

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they interpret this virtue and justice; they awaken within us the diviner mind, and rouse us to a consciousness of what is best in others and ourselves.

LORD MORLEY

On the Study of Literature

WHY indeed (one is tempted to ask in conclusion) should it be that the poets who have written for us the poetry richest in skyey grain, most free from admixture with the duller things of earth — the Shelleys, the Coleridges, the Keats — are the very poets whose lives are among the saddest records in literature? Is it that (by some subtile mystery of analogy) sorrow, passion, and fantasy are indissolubly connected, like water, fire, and cloud; that as from sun and dew are born the vapors, so from fire and tears ascend the “visions of aerial joy”; that the harvest waves richest over the battlefields of the soul; that the heart, like the earth, smells sweetest after rain; that the spell on which depend such necromantic castles is some spirit of pain charm-poisoned at their base? Such a poet, it may be, mists with sighs the window of his life until the tears run down it; then some air of searching poetry, like an air of searching frost, turns it to a crystal wonder. The god of golden song is the god, too, of the golden sun; so peradventure songlight is sunlight, and darkens the countenance of the soul. Perhaps the rays are to the stars what thorns are to the flowers; and so the poet, after wandering over heaven, returns with bleeding feet.

FRANCIS THOMPSON

Shelley: An Essay

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FATHERS of the Church (we would say), pastors of the Church, pious laics of the Church: you are taking from its walls the panoply of Aquinas; take also from its walls the psalter of Alighiere. Unroll the precedents of the Church's past; recall to your minds that Francis of Assisi was among the precursors of Dante; that sworn to Poverty he foreswore not Beauty, but discerned through the lamp Beauty the Light God; that he was even more a poet in his miracles than in his melody; that poetry clung round the souls of his Order. Follow his footsteps; you who have blessings for men, have you no blessing for the birds? Recall to your memory that, in their minor kind, the love poems of Dante shed no less honor on Catholicism than did the great religious poem which is itself pivoted on love; that in singing of Heaven he sung of Beatrice — this supporting angel was still carven on his harp even when he stirred its strings in Paradise. What you theoretically know, vividly realize: that with many the religion of beauty must always be a passion and a power, that it is only evil when divorced from the worship of Primal Beauty. Poetry is the preacher to men of the earthy as you of the Heavenly Fairness; of that earthy fairness which God has fashioned to his own image and likeness. You proclaim the day which the Lord had made, and she exults and rejoices in it. You praise the Creator for His works, and she shows you that they are very good. Beware how you misprize this potentially, for hers is the air of Giotto and Dante: beware how you misprize this insidious foe, for hers is the art of modern France and Byron. Her value, if you know it not, God knows, and know the enemies of God. If you have no room for her

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beneath the wings of the Holy One, there is place for her beneath the webs of the Evil One: whom you discard, he embraces; whom you cast down from an honorable seat, he will advance to a haughty throne; the brows you dislaurel of a just respect, he will bind with baleful splendors; the stone which you builders reject, he will make his head of the corner. May she not prophesy in the temple? then there is ready for her the tripod of Delphi. Eye her not askance if she seldom sing directly of religion: the bird gives glory to God though it sings only of its innocent loves. Suspicion creates its own cause; distrust begets reason for distrust. This beautiful, wild, feline poetry, wild, because left to range the wilds, restore to the hearth of your charity, shelter under the rafters of your Faith; discipline her to the sweet restraints of your household, feed her with the meat from your table, soften her with the amity of your children; tame her, fondle her, cherish her — you will no longer then need to flee her. Suffer her to wanton, suffer her to play, so she play round the foot of the Cross.

FRANCIS THOMPSON

Shelley: An Essay

THE practical value of a book is the inherent energy and quietness of the ideals in it — the immemorial way ideals have — have always had — of working themselves out in a man, of doing the work of the man and of doing their own work at the same time.

Inasmuch as ideals are what all real books are written with and read with, and inasmuch as ideals are the only known way a human being has of resting, in this present world, it would be hard to think of any book that would be more to the point in this modern civilization than a

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book that shall tell men how to read to live, — how to touch their ideals swiftly every day. Any book that should do this for us would touch life at more points and flow out on men's minds in more directions than any other that could be conceived. It would contribute as the June day, or as the night for sleep, to all men's lives, to all of the problems of all the world at once. It would be a night latch — to the ideal.

GERALD STANLEY LEE
The Lost Art of Reading

THE test of a real book is that it enables you to find yourself; it sends your mind adventuring, and delights your heart in that you have found another who has felt as you feel and who has delivered himself. Such books cannot be read always; they rebel against a companionship that breeds contempt. They will entertain you to a continual intimacy only when you shall have climbed the heights of your own mental pilgrimage, and have freed yourself of your soul's burden. . . .

The real books are very particular as to whom they will know. If they do not like you, you may clothe them in purple and gold, they will always hide themselves from you. If your spirit is attuned to them, they will be welcome in homespun or common cloth. It is the nature of great books to be silent and uncommunicative if you do not come to them with your mind dressed in its best and fit to enter the presence of a king of thought. They will then not question your dress, your wealth, or your social standing. They will but ask of your spirit — "Are you ready?" If it is, they will come to you as friends with outstretched arms; they

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will give you of the riches of their inexhaustible treasure-houses; they will charm you with the magic of their music; they will endow you with the gifts of knowledge; and they will bless you with the strength of their wisdom.

TEMPLE SCOTT

The Pleasure of Reading

V

COMPANIONS IN PLEASURE

V

COMPANIONS IN PLEASURE





*THE world was made for nothing other than to produce
a beautiful book.*

STEPHANE MALLARMÉ
Companions in Pleasure

BOOKS are not seldom talismans and spells.

W. COWPER
The Task, Bk. VI

*“AND thus my book hath been so much my pleasure,
and bringeth daily to me more pleasure and more,
that in respect of it, all other pleasures in very deed, be but
trifles and troubles unto me.”*

LADY JANE GREY
Roger Ascham's The Scholemaster, Bk. I

*NOTHING can supply the place of books. They are
cheering or soothing companions in solitude, illness,
affliction. The wealth of both continents would not com-
pensate for the good they impart. Let every man, if pos-
sible, gather some good books under his roof, and obtain
access for himself and family to some social library.
Almost any luxury should be sacrificed to this.*

DR. W. E. CHANNING
Self-Culture

O FOR a Booke and a shadie nooke,
 eyther in-a-doore or out ;
 With the grene leaves whisp'ring overhede,
 or the Streete cryes all about.
 Where I maie Reade all at my ease,
 both of the Newe and Olde ;
 For a jollie goode Booke whereon to looke,
 is better to me than Golde.

Old English Song

BUT how can I live here without my books? I
 really seem to myself crippled and only half my-
 self; for if, as the great Orator used to say, arms are
 a soldier's members, surely books are the limbs of scholars.
 Corasius says: Of a truth, he who would deprive me of
 books, my old friends, would take away all the delight
 of my life, nay, I will even say all desire of living.

BALTHASAR BONIFACIUS RHODIGINUS
Historia Ludicra

The Value and the Charm of Fairy Tales ∞

FOR so hath all wryters in times paste employed their
 travell and labours, that their posteritie might re-
 ceave some faict-full profile by the same. And therefore
 the poetes feigned not their fables in vaine, consideringe
 that children in time of their first studies, are muche allured
 thereby to proceed to more grave and deepe disciplines,

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whereas otherwise their mindes would quickly lothe the wise and prudent woorkes of learned men, wherein in such unripe yeeres they take no sparke of delectation at all. And not onely that profite arriseth to children by suche feigned fables, but also the vertues of men are covertly thereby commended, and their vices discommended and abhorred.

WILLIAM ADLINGTON

*The Epistle Dedicatory to his Translation of the
Golden Ass by Apuleius (1566)*

Sir Nathaniel. Sir, he hath never fed of the dainties that are bred in a book ;

He hath not eat paper, as it were ; he is only an animal, only sensible in the duller parts :

And such barren plants are set before us, that we thankful should be,

Which we of taste and feeling are, for those parts that do fructify in us more than he.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Love's Labour's Lost, Act IV, Sc. 2

GIVE me

Leave to enjoy myself. That place, that does
Contain my books, the best companions, is
To me a glorious court, where hourly I
Converse with the old sages and philosophers.
And sometimes for variety, I confer
With kings and emperors, and weigh their counsels ;
Calling their victories, if unjustly got,
Unto a strict account : and in my fancy,
Defaced their ill-planed statues. Can I then
Part with such constant pleasures, to embrace

Companions in Pleasure

Uncertain vanities? No: be it your care
To augment a heap of wealth; it shall be mine
To increase in knowledge. Lights there for my study!

JOHN FLETCHER

The Elder Brother, Act I, Sc. 2

O BLESSED Letters! that combine in one
All Ages past, and make one live with all.

By you we do confer with who are gone,
And the Dead-living unto Council call;
By you th' unborn shall have Communion
Of what we feel and what doth us befall.
Soul of the World, Knowledge without thee;

What hath the Earth that truly glorious is?

. . . What Good is like to this,

To do worthy the writing, and to write
Worthy the Reading, and the World's Delight?

SAMUEL DANIEL

Musophilus

AND tho' books, madam, cannot make this Mind,
Which we must bring apt to be set aright;
Yet do they rectify it in that Kind,

And touch it so, as that it turns that Way
Where Judgment lies. And tho' we cannot find
The certain Place of Truth; yet do they stay,
And entertain us near about the same:

And give the Soul the best Delight that may
Encheat it most, and most our Sp'rits enflame
To Thoughts of Glory, and to worthy Ends.

SAMUEL DANIEL

To The Lady Lucy, Countess of Bedford

The Friendship of Books.

. . . FAR more seemely were it for thee to have thy
Studie full of Bookes, than thy Purses full of
Mony.

JOHN LILLY

Euphues: the Anatomy of Wit

WHO is he that is now wholly overcome with idleness, or otherwise encircled in a labyrinth of worldly care, troubles, and discontents, that will not be much lightened in his mind by reading of some enticing story, true or feigned, where as in a glass he shall observe what our forefathers have done, the beginning, ruins, falls, periods of commonwealths, private men's actions displayed to the life, etc. . . . Whosoever he is therefore that is overrun with solitariness, or carried away with pleasing melancholy and vain conceits, and for want of employment knows not how to spend his time; or crucified with worldly care, I can prescribe him no better remedy than this of study. . . . Carden calls a library the physic of the soul; "divine authors fortify the mind, make men bold and constant; and (as Hyperius adds) godly conference will not permit the mind to be tortured with absurd cogitations." Rhasis enjoins continual conference to such melancholy men, perpetual discourse of some history, tale, poem, news, etc., which feeds the mind as meat and drink doth the body, and pleaseth as much. . . . Saith Lipsmus, "When I read Seneca, methinks I am beyond all human fortune, on the top of a hill above mortality." . . . I would for these causes wish him that is melancholy to use both human and divine authors, voluntarily to impose some task upon himself to divert his melancholy thoughts. . . .

ROBERT BURTON

The Anatomy of Melancholy

Companions in Pleasure

HE that loveth a book will never want a faithful friend, a wholesome counsellor, a cheerful companion, an effectual comforter. By study, by reading, by thinking, one may innocently divert and pleasantly entertain himself, as in all weathers, so in all fortunes.

ISAAC BARROW

MADAM,
Those writers, who solicit the protection of the noble and the great, are often exposed to censure by the impropriety of their addresses: a remark that will perhaps be too readily applied to him, who having nothing better to offer than the rude Songs of ancient Minstrels, aspires to the patronage of the Countess of Northumberland, and hopes that the barbarous productions of unpolished ages can obtain the approbation or the notice of her, who adorns courts by her presence, and diffuses elegance by her example.

But this impropriety, it is presumed, will disappear, when it is declared that these poems are presented to your Ladyship, not as labors of art, but as effusions of nature, showing the first efforts of ancient genius, and exhibiting the customs and opinions of remote ages, — of ages that had been almost lost to memory, had not the gallant deeds of your illustrious Ancestors preserved them from oblivion.

No active or comprehensive mind can forbear some attention to the reliques of antiquity: it is prompted by natural curiosity to survey the progress of life and manners, and to inquire by what gradations barbarity was civilized, grossness refined, and ignorance instructed: but this curiosity, Madam, must be stronger in those, who, like

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your Ladyship, can remark in every period the influence of some great Progenitor, and who still feel in their effects the transactions and events of distant centuries.

By such Bards, Madam, as I am now introducing to your presence, was the infancy of genius nurtured and advanced; by such were the minds of unlettered warriors softened and enlarged; by such was the memory of illustrious actions preserved and propagated; by such were the heroic deeds of the Earls of Northumberland sung at festivals in the hall of Alnwick: and those Songs which the bounty of your ancestors rewarded, now return to your Ladyship by a kind of hereditary right; and, I flatter myself, will find such reception as is usually shown to poets and historians by those, whose consciousness of merit makes it their interest to be long remembered.

I am, Madam,

Your Ladyship's most humble,
and most devoted servant,

THOMAS PERCY

*Dedication of Reliques of Ancient English Poetry
to the Countess of Northumberland, 1765*

WINGS have we, — and as far as we can go
We may find pleasure: wilderness and wood,
Blank ocean and mere sky, support that mood
Which with the lofty sanctifies the low.
Dreams, books, are each a world; and books, we know,
Are a substantial world, both pure and good:
Round these, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,
Our pastime and our happiness will grow.
There find I personal themes, a plenteous store,

Companions in Pleasure

Matter wherein right voluble I am,
To which I listen with a ready ear ;
Two shall be named, preëminently dear, —
The gently Lady married to the Moor ;
And heavenly Una with her milk-white Lamb.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

Personal Talk, III

A POET ! — He hath put his heart to school,
Nor dares to move unpropp'd upon the staff
Which Art hath lodged within his hand — must laugh
By precept only, and shed tears by rule.

Thy Art be Nature ; the live current quaff,
And let the groveller sip his stagnant pool,
In fear that else, when Critics grave and cool
Have killed him, Scorn should write his epitaph.
How does the Meadow-flower its bloom unfold ?

Because the lovely little flower is free
Down to its root, and, in that freedom, bold ;
And so the grandeur of the Forest-tree
Comes not by casting in a formal mould,
But from its own divine vitality.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

A Poet ! — He hath put his heart to school

The Garden of Boccaccio ~ ~ ~ ~

OF late, in one of those most weary hours,
When life seems emptied of all genial powers,
A dreary mood, which he who ne'er has known
May bless his happy lot, I sate alone ;
And, from the numbing spell to win relief,
Call'd on the Past for thought of glee or grief.

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In vain ! bereft alike of grief and glee,
I sate and cow'r'd o'er my own vacancy !
And as I watched the full continuous ache,
Which, all else slumbering, seem'd alone to wake ;
O Friend ! long wont to notice yet conceal,
And soothe by silence what words cannot heal,
I but half saw that quiet hand of thine
Place on my desk this exquisite design,
Boccaccio's Garden and its faery,
The love, the joyaunce, and the gallantry !
An Idyll, with Boccaccio's spirit warm,
Framed in the silent poesy of form.
Like flocks a-down a newly bathed steep
Emerging from a mist : or like a stream
Of music soft, that not dispels the sleep,
But casts in happier moulds the slumberer's dream,
Gazed by an idle eye with silent might
The picture stole upon my inward sight.
A tremulous warmth crept gradual o'er my chest,
As though an infant's finger touch'd my breast.
And one by one (I know not whence) were brought
All spirits of power that most had stirr'd my thought
In selfless boybood, on a new world tost
Of wonder, and in its own fancies lost ;
Or charm'd my youth, that, kindled from above,
Loved ere it loved, and sought a form for love ;
Or lent a lustre to the earnest scan
Of manhood, musing what and whence is man !
Wild strains of Scalds, that in the sea-worn caves
Rehearsed their war-spell to the winds and waves ;
Or fateful hymn of those prophetic maids,
That call'd on Hertha in deep forest glades ;

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Or minstrel lay, that cheer'd the baron's feast ;
Or rhyme of city pomp, of monk and priest,
Judge, mayor, and many a guild in long array,
To high-church pacing on the great saint's day.
And many a verse which to myself I sang,
That woke the tear yet stole away the pang,
Of hopes which in lamenting I renew'd.
And last, a matron now, of sober mien,
Yet radiant still and with no earthly sheen,
Whom as a faery child my childhood woo'd
Even in my dawn of thought — Philosophy ;
Though then unconscious of herself, pardie,
She bore no other name than Poesy ;
And, like a gift from heaven, in life's glee,
That had but newly left a mother's knee,
Prattled and play'd with bird and flower, and stone,
As if with elfin playfellows well known,
And life reveal'd to innocence alone.
Thanks, gentle artist ! now I can descry
Thy fair creation with a mastering eye,
And *all* awake ! And now in fixed gaze stand,
Now wander through the Eden of thy hand ;
Praise the green arches, on the fountain clear
See fragment shadows of the crossing deer ;
And with that serviceable nymph I stoop
The crystal from its restless pool to scoop.
I see no longer ! I myself am there,
Sit on the ground-sward, and the banquet share.
'Tis I, that sweep that lute's love-echoing strings,
And gaze upon the maid who gazing sings ;
Or pause and listen to the tinkling bells
From the high tower, and think that there she dwells.

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With old Boccaccio's soul I stand possest,
And breathe an air like life, that swells my chest.

The brightness of the world, O thou once free,
And always fair, rare land of courtesy !
O Florence ! with the Tuscan fields and hills
And famous Arno, fed with all their rills ;
Thou brightest star of star-bright Italy !
Rich, ornate, populous, all treasures thine,
The golden corn, the olive, and the vine,
Fair cities, gallant mansions, castles old,
And forests, where beside his leafy hold
The sullen boar hath heard the distant horn ;
Palladian palace with its storied halls ;
Fountains, where Love lies listening to their falls ;
Gardens, where flings the bridge its airy span,
And Nature makes her happy home with man :
Where many a gorgeous flower is duly fed
With its own rill, on its own spangled bed,
And wreathes the marble urn, or leans its head,
A mimic mourner, that with veil withdrawn
Weeps liquid gems, the presents of the dawn ; —
Thine all delights, and every muse is thine ;
And more than all, the embrace and intertwine
Of all with all in gay and twinkling dance !
Mid gods of Greece and warriors of romance,
See ! Boccace sits, unfolding on his knees
The new-found roll of old Mæonides ;
But from his mantle's fold, and near the heart,
Peers Ovid's Holy Book of Love's sweet smart !

O all-enjoying and all-blending sage,
Long be it mine to con thy mazy page,

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Where, half conceal'd, the eye of fancy views
Fauns, nymphs, and winged saints, all gracious to thy
muse !

Still in thy garden let me watch their pranks,
And see in Dian's vest between the ranks
Of the twin vines, some maid that half believes
The *vestal* fires, of which her lover grieves,
With that sly satyr peeping through the leaves!

S. T. COLERIDGE

I MUST confess that I dedicate no inconsiderable portion of my time to other people's thoughts. I dream away my life in others' speculations. I love to lose myself in other men's minds. When I am not walking, I am reading ; I cannot sit and think. Books think for me.

I have no repugnances. Shaftesbury is not too genteel for me, nor Jonathan Wild too low. I can read anything which I call a book. There are things in that shape which I cannot allow for such.

In this catalogue of *books which are no books* — *biblia-a-biblia* — I reckon Court Calendars, Directories, Pocket Books (the Literary excepted), Draught Boards, bound and lettered on the back, Scientific Treatises, Almanacs, Statutes at Large : the works of Hume, Gibbon, Robertson, Beattie, Soame Jenyns, and generally, all those volumes which "no gentleman's library should be without" : the Histories of Flavius Josephus (that learned Jew), and Paley's Moral Philosophy. With these exceptions, I can read almost anything. I bless my stars for a taste so catholic, so unexcluding.

I confess that it moves my spleen to see these *things in books' clothing* perched upon shelves, like false saints,

usurpers of true shrines, intruders into the sanctuary, thrusting out the legitimate occupants. To reach down a well-bound semblance of a volume, and hope it some kind-hearted play-book, then, opening what "seems its leaves," to come bolt upon a withering Population Essay. To expect a Steele or a Farquhar, and find — Adam Smith. To view a well-arranged assortment of block-headed Encyclopædias (Anglicanas or Metropolitanas) set out in an array of russia, or morocco, when a tithe of that good leather would comfortably re-clothe my shivering folios, would renovate Paracelsus himself, and enable old Raymund Lully to look like himself again in the world. I never see these impostors, but I long to strip them, to warm my ragged veterans in their spoils.

To be strong-backed and neat-bound is the desideratum of a volume. Magnificence comes after. This, when it can be afforded, is not to be lavished upon all kinds of books indiscriminately. I would not dress a set of magazines, for instance, in full suit. The dishabille, or half binding (with russia backs ever), is *our* costume. A Shakespeare or a Milton (unless the first editions) it were mere foppery to trick out in gay apparel. The possession of them confers no distinction. The exterior of them (the things themselves being so common), strange to say, raises no sweet emotions, no tickling sense of property in the owner. Thomson's Seasons, again, looks best (I maintain it) a little torn and dog's-eared. How beautiful to a genuine lover of reading are the sullied leaves, and wornout appearance, nay, the very odor (beyond russia) if we would not forget kind feelings in fastidiousness, of an old "Circulating Library" Tom Jones, or Vicar of Wakefield! How they speak of the

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thousand thumbs that have turned over their pages with delight! — of the lone sempstress, whom they may have cheered (milliner or harder-working mantua-maker) after her long day's needle-toil, running far into midnight, when she has snatched an hour, ill spared from sleep, to steep her cares, as in some Lethean cup, in spelling out their enchanting contents! Who would have them a whit less soiled? What better condition could we desire to see them in?

CHARLES LAMB

Last Essays of Elia: Detached Thoughts on Books

MUCH have I travell'd in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep-browed Homer ruled as his demesne;
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He star'd at the Pacific — and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise —
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

JOHN KEATS

On first looking into Chapman's Homer

HE found shelter among books, which insult not.

CHARLES LAMB

Elia's Essays: Poor Relations

THEY [Books] are the nearest to our thoughts: they wind into the heart; the poet's verse slides into the current of our blood. We read them when young, we remember them when old. We read there of what has happened to others; we feel that it has happened to ourselves. They are to be had everywhere cheap and good. We breathe but the air of books: we owe everything to their authors, on this side barbarism; and we pay them easily with contempt, while living, and with an epitaph, when dead! . . . there are neither picture-galleries nor theatres-royal on Salisbury-plain, where I write this; but here, even here, with a few old authors, I can manage to get through the summer or the winter months, without ever knowing what it is to feel *ennui*. They sit with me at breakfast; they walk out with me before dinner. After a long walk through unfrequented tracks, after starting the hare from the fern, or hearing the wing of the raven rustling above my head, or being greeted by the woodman's "stern good-night," as he strikes into his narrow homeward path, I can "take mine ease at mine inn," beside the blazing hearth, and shake hands with Signor Orlando Friscobaldo, as the oldest acquaintance I have. Ben Jonson, learned Chapman, Master Webster, and Master Heywood, are there; and seated round, discourse the silent hours away. Shakespeare is there himself, not in Cibber's manager's coat. Spenser is hardly yet returned from a ramble through the woods, or is concealed behind a group of nymphs, fauns, and satyrs. Milton lies on the table, as on an altar, never taken up or laid down without reverence. Lyly's Endymion sleeps with the moon, that shines in at the window; and a breath of wind stirring at a distance seems

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a sigh from the tree under which he grew old. Faustus disputes in one corner of the room with fiendish faces, and reasons of divine astrology. Bellafront soothes Matheo, Vittoria triumphs over her judges, and old Chapman repeats one of the hymns of Homer, in his own fine translation! I should have no objection to pass my life in this manner out of the world, not thinking of it, nor it of me; neither abused by my enemies, nor defended by my friends; careless of the future, but sometimes dreaming of the past which might as well be forgotten!

WILLIAM HAZLITT

Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth

BY conversing with the *mighty dead*, we imbibe sentiment with knowledge. We become strongly attached to those who can no longer either hurt or serve us, except through the influence which they exert over the mind. We feel the presence of that power which gives immortality to human thoughts and actions, and catch the flame of enthusiasm from all ages and nations. . . . As to the books you will have to read by choice or for amusement, the best are the commonest. The names of many of them are already familiar to you. Read them as you grow up with all the satisfaction in your power, and make much of them. It is perhaps the greatest pleasure you will have in life, the one you will think of longest, and repent of least. If my life had been more full of calamity than it has been (much more than I hope yours will be), I would live it over again, my poor little boy, to have read the books I did in my youth.

WILLIAM HAZLITT

On the Conduct of Life, or Advice to a Schoolboy

A CRICKET chirps on the hearth, and we are reminded of Christmas gambols long ago. The very cries in the street seem to be of a former date; and the dry toast eats very much as it did — twenty years ago. A rose smells doubly sweet, after being stifled with tinctures and essences; and we enjoy the idea of a journey and an inn the more for having been bed-ridden. But a book is the secret and sure charm to bring all these implied associations to a focus. I should prefer an old one, Mr. Lamb's favorite, the *Journey to Lisbon*, by Henry Fielding; or the *Decameron*, if I could get it. . . . Well, then, I have got the new paraphrase on the *Beggar's Opera*, — *Paul Clifford*, — by Bulwer, am fairly embarked in it; and at the end of the first volume, where I am galloping across the heath with the three highwaymen, while the moon is shining full upon them, feel my nerves so braced, and my spirits so exhilarated, that, to say truth, I am scarce sorry for the occasion that has thrown me upon the work and the author — have quite forgot my *sick room*, and am more than half ready to recant the doctrine that a *free admission* to the theatre is —

“ The true pathos and sublime
Of human life ; ”

for I feel as I read that if the stage shows us the masks of men and the pageant of the world, books let us into their souls and lay open to us the secrets of our own. They are the first and last, the most home-felt, the most heart-felt of all our enjoyments !

WILLIAM HAZLITT
The Sick Chamber (*New Monthly Magazine*,
August, 1830)

NOW, of all the amusements which can possibly be imagined for a hard-working man, after his daily toil, or in its intervals, there is nothing like reading an entertaining book, supposing him to have a taste for it, and supposing him to have the book to read. It calls for no bodily exertion, of which he has had enough or too much. It relieves his home of its dullness and sameness, which, in nine cases out of ten, is what drives him out to the ale-house, to his own ruin and his family's. It transports him into a livelier, and gayer, and more diversified and interesting scene, and while he enjoys himself there, he may forget the evils of the present moment, fully as much as if he were ever so drunk, with the great advantage of finding himself the next day with his money in his pocket, or at least laid out in real necessities and comforts for himself and his family, — and without a headache. Nay, it accompanies him to his next day's work, and if the book he has been reading be anything above the very idlest and lightest, gives him something to think of besides the mere mechanical drudgery of everyday occupation, — something he can enjoy while absent, and look forward with pleasure to return to.

But supposing him to have been fortunate in the choice of his book, and to have alighted upon one really good and of a good class. What a source of domestic enjoyment is laid open! What a bond of family union! He may read it aloud, or make his wife read it, or his eldest boy or girl, or pass it round from hand to hand. All have the benefit of it — all contribute to the gratification of the rest, and a feeling of common interest and pleasure is excited. Nothing unites people like companionship in

intellectual enjoyment. It does more, it gives them mutual respect, and to each among them self-respect — that corner-stone of all virtue.

SIR JOHN HERSCHEL

*An Address to the Subscribers to the Windsor and Eton
Public Library and Reading Room, January 29,
1833.*

ARE books, in truth, a dead letter? To those who have no bright mirror in their own bosoms to reflect their images, they are! but the lively and active scenes, which they call forth in well-framed minds, exceed the liveliness of reality. Heads and hearts of a coarser grain require the substance of material objects to put them in motion. Books instruct us calmly, and without intermingling with their instruction any of those painful impressions of superiority, which we must necessarily feel from a living instructor. They wait the pace of each man's capacity; stay for his want of perception, without reproach; go backward and forward with him at his wish; and furnish inexhaustible repetitions. . . . Above all there is this value in books, that they enable us to converse with the dead. There is something in this beyond the mere intrinsic worth of what they have left us. When a person's body is mouldering, cold and insensible, in the grave, we feel a sacred sentiment of veneration for the living memorials of his mind.

SIR EGERTON BRYDGES

The Ruminator: Books

OF all the human relaxations which are free from guilt perhaps there is none so dignified as reading. It

is no little good to while away the tediousness of existence in a gentle and harmless exercise of the intellectual faculties. If we build castles in the air that vanish as quickly as the passing clouds, still some beneficial result has been obtained; some hours of weariness have been stolen from us; and probably some cares have been robbed of their sting. I do not here mean to discuss the scale of excellence among the various studies that books afford. It is my purpose to show that even the most trifling books, which give harmless pleasure, produce a good far exceeding what the world ascribed to more high-sounding occupations. When we recollect of how many it is the lot, even against choice, to pass their days in solitude, how admirable is the substitute for conversation, which the powers of genius and art of printing bestow!

SIR EGERTON BRYDGES

The Ruminator: On the Pleasures of Reading

IT is Books that teach us to refine on our pleasures when young, and which, having so taught us, enable us to recall them with satisfaction when old. For let the half-witted say what they will of delusions, no thorough reader ever ceased to believe in his books, whatever doubts they might have taught him by the way. They are pleasures too palpable and habitual for him to deny. The habit itself is a pleasure. They contain his young dreams and his old discoveries; all that he has lost, as well as all that he has gained; and, as he is no surer of the gain than of the loss, except in proportion to the strength of his perceptions, the dreams, in being renewed, become truths again. He is again in communion with the past; again interested in its adventures, grieving with its

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griefs, laughing with its merriment, forgetting the very chair and room he is sitting in. Who, in the mysterious operation of things, shall dare to assert in what unreal corner of time and space that man's mind is; or what better proof he has of the existence of the poor goods and chattels about him, which at that moment (to him) are non-existent? "Oh!" people say, "but he wakes up, and sees them there." Well; he woke *down* then, and saw the rest. What we distinguish into dreams and realities, are, in both cases, but representatives of impressions. Who shall know what difference there is in them at all, save that of degree, till some higher state of existence help us to a criterion?

For our part, such real things to us are books, that, if habit and perception make the difference between real and unreal, we may say that we more frequently wake out of common life to *them*, than out of them to common life. Yet we do not find the life the less real. We only feel books to be a constituent part of it; a world, as the poet says,

"Round which, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,
Our pastime and our happiness will grow."

LEIGH HUNT

A Book for a Corner — Introduction

GOLDEN volumes! richest treasures!
Objects of delicious pleasures!
You my eyes rejoicing please,
You my hands in rapture seize!
Brilliant wits, and musing sages,
Lights who beamed through many ages,
Left to your conscious leaves their glory,
And dared to trust you with their story;

Companions in Pleasure

And now their hope of fame achieved !
Dear volumes ! you have not deceived !

ISAAC D'ISRAELI
Imitated from Rantzau

MEN of letters find in books an occupation congenial to their sentiments ; labor without fatigue ; repose with activity ; an employment, interrupted without inconvenience, and exhaustless without satiety. They remain ever attached to their studies. Their library and their chamber are contiguous ; and often in this contracted space, does the opulent owner consume his delicious hours. — His pursuits are ever changing, and he enlivens the austere by the lighter studies. It was said of a great hunter, that he did not live, but hunted ; and it may be said of the man of letters, that he does not live, but meditates. He is that happy man who creates hourly wants, and enjoys the voluptuousness of immediate gratification. . . .

Those who feel with enthusiasm the eloquence of a fine writer, insensibly receive some particles from it ; a virtuous writer communicates virtue ; a refined writer, a subtile delicacy ; a sublime writer, an elevation of sentiment. All these characters of the mind, in a few years, are diffused throughout the nation. Among us, what acute reasoners has the refined penetration of Hume formed ; what amenity of manners has not Addison introduced ; to how many virtuous youths have not the moral essays of Johnson imparted fortitude, and illumined with reflection ?

ISAAC D'ISRAELI
On the Manner and Genius of the Literary Character

The Friendship of Books

Books our Friends in Distress ~ ~ ~

THE scholar only knows how dear these silent yet eloquent companions of pure thoughts and innocent hours become in the seasons of adversity. When all that is worldly turns to dross around us, these only retain their steady value. When friends go cold, and the converse of intimates languishes into vapid civility and commonplace, these only continue the unaltered countenance of happier days, and cheer us with that true friendship which never deceived hope nor deserted sorrow.

WASHINGTON IRVING

The Sketch Book: Roscoe

OF the pleasures of reading I will say, that there is no man so high as to be enabled to dispense with them; and no man so humble who should be compelled to forego them. Rely upon it, that in the highest fortune and the highest station, hours of lassitude and weariness will intrude, unless they be cheered by intellectual occupation. Rely on it, also, that there is no life so toilsome, so devoted to the cares of this world, and to the necessity of providing the daily bread, but what it will afford intervals (if they be only sought out) in which intellectual pleasures may be cultivated and oblivion of other cares enjoyed. Depend upon it that these are pleasures, which he who condemns will find himself a miserable loser in the end.

LORD MAHON

Address to Manchester Athenæum, 1848

IN the highest civilization the book is still the highest delight. He who has once known its satisfactions is provided with a resource against calamity. Like

Companions in Pleasure

Plato's disciple who has perceived a truth, "he is preserved from harm until another period." In every man's memory, with the hours when life culminated are usually associated certain books which met his views. Of a large and powerful class we might ask with confidence, What is the event they most desire? what gift? What but the book that shall come, which they have sought through all libraries, through all languages, that shall be to their mature eyes what many a tinsel-covered toy pamphlet was to their childhood, and shall speak to the imagination? Our high respect for a well-read man is praise enough of literature. If we encountered a man of rare intellect, we should ask him what books he read. We expect a great man to be a good reader; or in proportion to the spontaneous power should be the assimilating power. And though such are a more difficult and exacting class, they are not less eager. "He that borrows the aid of an equal understanding," said Burke, "doubles his own; he that uses that of a superior elevates his own to the stature of that he contemplates."

R. W. EMERSON

Letters and Social Aims: Quotation and Originality

NOVELS are sweets. All people with healthy literary appetites love them — almost all women; a vast number of clever, hard-headed men, judges, bishops, chancellors, mathematicians, are notorious novel-readers, as well as young boys and sweet girls, and their kind, tender mothers.

W. M. THACKERAY

Roundabout Papers

The Friendship of Books

I SHOULD never forgive myself if I forgot *The Egoist*.

It is art, if you like, but it belongs purely to didactic art, and from all the novels I have read (and I have read thousands) stands in a place by itself. Here is a Nathan for the modern David ; here is a book to send the blood into men's faces. Satire, the angry picture of human faults, is not great art; we can all be angry with our neighbor; what we want is to be shown, not his defects, of which we are too conscious, but his merits, to which we are too blind. And *The Egoist* is a satire; so much must be allowed ; but it is a satire of singular quality, which tells you nothing of that obvious mote, which is engaged from first to last with that invisible beam. It is yourself that is hunted down; these are your own faults that are dragged into the day and numbered, with lingering relish, with cruel cunning and precision. A young friend of Mr. Meredith's (as I have the story) came to him in an agony. "This is too bad of you," he cried. "Willoughby is me!" "No, but my dear fellow," said the author; "he is all of us." I have read *The Egoist* five or six times myself, and I mean to read it again; for I am like the young friend of the anecdote—I think Willoughby an unmanly but a very serviceable exposure of myself.

R. L. STEVENSON

Books which have influenced Me

NOT all men can read all books ; it is only in a chosen few that any man will find his appointed food; and the fittest lessons are the most palatable, and make themselves welcome to the mind. A writer learns this early, and it is his chief support ; he goes on unafraid, laying down the law ; and he is sure at heart that most of what

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he says is demonstrably false, and much of a mingled strain, and some hurtful, and very little good for service ; but he is sure besides that when his words fall into the hands of any genuine reader, they will be weighed and winnowed, and only that which suits will be assimilated ; and when they fall into the hands of one who cannot intelligently read, they come there quite silent and inarticulate, falling upon deaf ears, and his secret is kept as if he had not written.

R. L. STEVENSON

Books which have influenced Me

GIVE me a nook and a book,
And let the proud world spin round :
Let it scramble by hook or by crook
For wealth or a name with a sound.
You are welcome to amble your ways,
Aspirers to place or to glory ;
May big bells jangle your praise,
And golden pens blazon your story !
For me, let me dwell in my nook,
Here, by the curve of this brook,
That croons to the tune of my book,
Whose melody wafts me forever
On the waves of an unseen river.

Give me a book and a nook
Far away from the glitter and strife ;
Give me a staff and a crook,
The calm and the sweetness of life :

Vain world, let me reign in my nook,

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King of this kingdom, my book,
A region by fashion forsook :
Pass on, ye lean gamblers for glory,
Nor mar the sweet tune of my story !

WILLIAM FREELAND

A Birth Song and other Poems

WHAT I would speak of now is the engrossing and all-absorbing quality of books. Reflection itself, of course, possesses the same attribute, in a less degree ; but we cannot sit down to reflect at a moment's notice — deeply or earnestly enough to forget what is passing around us — and be perfectly sure of doing it, any more than we can be sure of going to sleep when we wish to do so. Now, a congenial book can be taken up by any lover of books, with the certainty of its transporting the reader within a few minutes to a region immeasurably removed from that which he desires to quit. . . . Books are the blessed chloroform of the mind. We wonder how folks in trouble did without them in old time.

It is not a very high claim that is here set forth on behalf of Literature — that of Pass-time, and yet what a blessed boon even that is ! Conceive the hours of *inertia* (a thing different from idleness) that it has mercifully consumed for us ! hours wherein nothing could be done, nothing, perhaps, be *thought*, of our own selves, by reason of some impending calamity.

I am writing of the obligation which we owe to Literature, and not to Religion ; yet I cannot but feel “thankful” — using the word in its ordinary and devotional sense — to many a book which is no sermon, nor tract, nor commentary, nor anything of that kind at all. Thus,

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I have cause to revere the name of Defoe, who reached his hand down through a century and a half to wipe away bitter tears from my childish eyes. The going back to school was always a dreadful woe to me, casting its black shadow far into the latter part of my brief holidays. I have had my share of suffering and sorrow since, like other men, but I have seldom felt so absolutely wretched as when, a little boy, I was about to exchange my pleasant home-life for the hardships and uncongenialities of school. . . . And yet, I protest, I had but to take up *Robinson Crusoe*, and in a very few minutes I was out of all thought of the approaching calamity. . . . I had travelled over a thousand leagues of sea, I was in my snug, well-fortified cave, with the ladder upon the right side of it, "so that neither man nor beast could get at me," with my half-a-dozen muskets loaded, and my powder distributed in separate parcels, so that not even a thunderbolt should do me any irreparable injury. Or, if not quite so secure, I was visiting my summer plantation among my goats and corn, or shooting, in the still astonished woods, birds of marvellous beauty; or lying upon my stomach upon the top of the hill, watching through my spy-glass the savages putting to sea, and not displeased to find myself once more alone in my own little island. No living human being could just then have done me such a service as dead Defoe.

Again, during that agonizing period which intervened between my proposal of marriage by letter to Jemima Anne, and my reception of her reply, how should I ever have kept myself alive, save for the chivalrous aid of the Black Knight in *Ivanhoe*. To him, mainly, assisted by Re-

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becca, and (I am bound to say) by that scoundrel Brian de Bois Guilbert, are my obligations due, that I did not — through the extremities of despair and hope, suffered during that interval — become a drivelling idiot.

When her answer did arrive — in the negative — what was it which preserved me from the noose, the razor, or the stream, but Mr. Carlyle's *French Revolution*. In the woes of poor Louis Capet, I forgot my own. . . . Who, having a grateful heart, can forget these things, or deny the Blessedness of Books? If it were only for the hours of weary waiting which they have consumed for me at desolate railway stations, I pay them grateful homage.

Nay, under far more serious circumstances, when disappointment has lain heavy on my soul, and once when ruin itself seemed overshadowing me and mine, what escape have I not found from irremediable woes in taking the hand of Samuel Johnson (kindly introduced to that great man by Mr. Boswell), and hearing him discourse with wondrous wisdom upon all things under heaven, sometimes at a club of wits and men of letters, and sometimes at a common tavern table, and sometimes even in an open boat upon the Hebridean seas.

I often think, if such be the fascination exercised by books upon their readers, how wondrous must be the enchantment wrought upon the Writers themselves! What human sorrow can afflict, what prosperity dazzle them, while they are describing the fortunes of the offspring of their own imagination? They have only to close their study door, and take their magic pen in hand, and lo! they are at once transported from this weary world of duns, and critics, and publishers, into whatever region

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and time they will. Yes, truly, it is for authors themselves, more than for any other order of men whatever, to acknowledge the Blessedness of Books.

JAMES PAYN

The Blessedness of Books

HAPPY is he who, when the day's work is done, finds his rest, and solace, and recreation in communion with the master minds of the present and of the past — in study, in literature, and the enjoyment of pleasures which are to be derived from this source. If I might address to the younger portion of the community a few words of advice and exhortation — trusting to one who has been as hard a worker as the hardest workers amongst you — I would say there is no rest, no recreation, no refreshment to the wearied and jaded body and mind, worn by work and toil, equal to the intellectual pleasures to which I have just been referring. Let them bear in mind that the time will come when the pleasures that now allure them and draw them away from intellectual pursuits will come to an end. Old age will take the place of bodily vigor. Let them again trust to one who is advancing fast in declining years — there is no enjoyment to equal the enjoyment of the great intellectual treasures which are always at hand and always at your disposal.

LORD CHIEF JUSTICE COCKBURN

Address to the Manchester Athenæum

BUT the finest music in the room is that which streams out to the ear of the spirit in many an exquisite strain from the hanging shelf of books on the opposite wall. Every volume there is an instrument

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which some melodist of the mind created and set vibrating with music, as a flower shakes out its perfume or a star shakes out its light. Only listen, and they soothe all care, as though the silken-soft leaves of poppies had been made vocal and poured into the ear.

JAMES LANE ALLEN

A Kentucky Cardinal, Ch. I

IT is the first trait of a great book, it seems to me, that it makes all other books — little hurrying, petulant books — wait. A kind of immeasurable elemental hunger comes to a man out of it. Somehow I feel I have not had it out with a great book if I have not faced other great things with it. I want to face storms with it, hours of weariness and miles of walking with it. It seems to ask me to. It seems to bring with it something which makes me want to stop my mere reading-and-doing kind of life, my ink-and-paper imitation kind of life, and come out and be a companion with the silent shining, with the eternal going on of things. It seems to be written in every writing that is worth a man's while that it cannot — that it shall not — be read by itself. It is written that a man shall work to read, that he must win some delight to do his reading with. Many and many a winter day I have tramped with four lines down to the edge of the night, to overtake my soul — to read four lines with. I have faced a wind for hours — been bitterly cold with it — before the utmost joy of the book I had lost would come back to me. I find that when I am being normal (vacations mostly) I scarcely know what it is to give myself over to another mind for more than an hour or so at a time. If a chapter has any-

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thing in it, I want to do something with it, go out and believe it, live with it, exercise it a while.

GERALD STANLEY LEE

The Lost Art of Reading

AMONG the most satisfying of all pleasures is the pleasure of reading. The mind is fed with noble thoughts and the soul delighted with the revealing beauty of verbal expression. It is also the most subtle of all pleasures, appealing to our pure imagination. It demands of us, for its real enjoyment, the finer accomplishments of mind and heart, the exercise of our highest powers.

The words and sentences of the printed page are the stimuli to the imagination which refashions experiences of sense into ideal existences. The reader thus lives in the Realm of the Ideal. The more real this Realm is to him, and the more vividly his imagination creates it for him, the greater will be his pleasure and the keener his personal enjoyment; for the clearer his understanding of the matter in hand the greater will be his sense of personal accomplishment and personal power.

TEMPLE SCOTT

The Pleasure of Reading

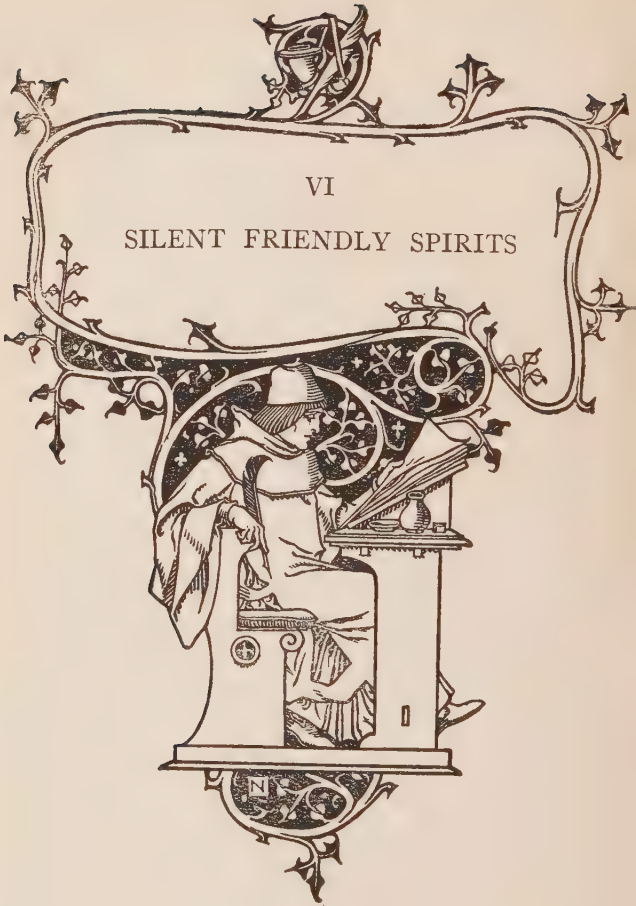


VI

SILENT FRIENDLY SPIRITS

VI

SILENT FRIENDLY SPIRITS





THE words of the good are like a staff in a slippery place.

Hindoo Saying

BOOKS are the immortal sons deifying their sires.

PLATO

*WHILE you converse with lords and dukes,
I have their betters here — my books:*

Fixed in an elbow-chair at ease,

I choose companions as I please.

I'd rather have one single shelf

Than all my friends, except myself;

For after all that can be said

Our best acquaintance are the dead.

THOMAS SHERIDAN

Poem to Jonathan Swift

LET us thank God for books. When I consider what some books have done for the world, and what they are doing, how they keep up our hope, awaken new courage and faith, soothe pain, give an ideal life to those whose homes are hard and cold, bind together distant ages and foreign lands, create new worlds of beauty, bring down truths from heaven — I give eternal blessings for this gift, and pray that we may use it aright, and abuse it not.

JAMES FREEMAN CLARKE

AND as for me, though that I konne but lyte,
On boke for to rede I me delyte,
And to hem yive I feyth and ful credence,
And in myn herte have hem in reverence
So hertely, that ther is game noon,
That fro my bokes maketh me to goon,
But yt be seldome on the holy day.
Save, certeynly, when that the monthe of May
Is comen, and that I here the foules synge,
And that the floures gynnen for to sprynge,
Farewel my boke, and my devocion.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER
Legende of Goode Women

IT does not matter how many, but how good, books
you have.

SENECA

Concerning the Honor of Books ~ ~ ~

SINCE honor from the honorer proceeds,
How well do they deserve, that memorize
And leave in books for all posterities
The names of worthies and their virtuous deeds;
When all their glory else, like water-weeds
Without their element, presently dies,
And all their greatness quite forgotten lies,
And when and how they flourished no man heeds !

The Friendship of Books

How poor remembrances are statues, tombs
And other monuments that men erect
To princes, which remain in closéd rooms,
Where but a few behold them, in respect
Of Books, that to the universal eye
Show how they lived ; the other where they lie !

JOHN FLORIO

*Prefixed to the second edition of John Florio's
Translation of Montaigne's Essays, 1613*

ME, poor man, my library
Was dukedom enough.

W. SHAKESPEARE

The Tempest, Act I, Sc. 2

KNOWING that I loved my books, he furnished me,
From my own library, with volumes that
I prize above my dukedom.

W. SHAKESPEARE

The Tempest, Act I, Sc. 2

COME, and take a choice of all my library ;
And so beguile thy sorrow.

W. SHAKESPEARE

Titus Andronicus, Act IV, Sc. 1

WHEN I would know thee, Goodyere, my thought
looks

Upon thy well-made choice of friends and books ;

Silent Friendly Spirits

Then do I love thee and behold thy ends
In making thy friends books, and thy books friends.

BEN JONSON
To Sir Henry Goodyere

I HAVE heard some with deep sighs lament the lost lines of Cicero; others with as many groans deplore the combustion of the library of Alexandria: for my own part, I think there be too many in the world; and could with patience behold the urn and ashes of the Vatican, could I, with a few others, recover the perished leaves of Solomon. . . . 'Tis not a melancholy *utinam* of my own, but the desires of better heads, that there were a general synod—not to unite the incompatible difference of religion, but, — for the benefit of learning, to reduce it, as it lay at first, in a few and solid authors; and to condemn to the fire those swarms and millions of rhapsodies, begotten only to distract and abuse the weaker judgments of scholars, and to maintain the trade and mystery of typographers.

SIR THOMAS BROWNE
Religio Medici

WHEN there is no recreation or business for thee abroad, thou may'st have a company of honest old fellows in their leathern jackets in thy study which will find thee excellent divertisement at home. . . . To divert at any time a troublesome fancy, run to thy books; they presently fix thee to them, and drive the other out of thy thoughts. They always receive thee with the same kindness.

THOMAS FULLER
The Holy State: Of Books

The Friendship of Books

YOU shall therefore wit, that this gentleman above named [Don Quixote], the spurts that he was idle (which was the longer part of the year), did apply himself wholly to the reading of books of Knighthood, and that with such gusts and delights, as he almost wholly neglected the exercise of hunting; yea, and the very administration of his household affairs. And his curiosity and folly came to that pass, that he made away many acres of arable land to buy him books of that kind, and therefore he brought to his house as many as ever he could get of that subject. . . .

In resolution, he plunged himself so deeply in his reading of these books, as he spent many times in the lecture of them whole days and nights; and in the end through his little sleep and much reading, he dried up his brains in such sort as he lost wholly his judgment. His fantasy was filled with those things that he read, of enchantments, quarrels, battles, challenges, wounds, wooings, loves, tempests, and other impossible follies. And these toys did so firmly possess his imagination with an infallible opinion that all that *machina* of dreamed inventions which he read was true, as he accounted no history in the world to be so certain and sincere as they were. . . .

Finally, his wit being wholly extinguished, he fell into one of the strangest conceits that ever mad man stumbled on in this world; to wit, it seemed unto him very requisite and behooveful, as well for the augmentation of his honor as also for the benefit of the commonwealth, that he himself should become a knight-errant, and go throughout the world, with his horse and armor, to seek adventures, and practice in person all that he had

Silent Friendly Spirits

read was used by knights of yore ; revenging of all kinds of injuries, and offering himself to occasions and dangers which, being once happily achieved, might gain him eternal renown. The poor soul did already figure himself crowned, through the valor of his arm, at least Emperor of Trapisonda ; and led thus by these soothing thoughts, and borne away with the exceeding delight he found in them, he hastened all that he might, to effect his urging desires.

MIGUEL DE CERVANTES

The History of Don Quixote

Translated by *Thomas Shelton*.

FOR Books are not absolutely dead things, but doe contain a potencie of Life in them to be as active as that Soule was whose progeny they are ; nay, they do preserve, as in a violl, the purest efficacie and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. I know they are as lively, and as vigorously productive, as those fabulous Dragons teeth ; and being sown up and down, may chance to spring up armed men. And yet on the other hand unlesse warinesse be us'd, as good almost kill a Man as kill a good Book ; who kills a Man kills a reasonable creature, Gods Image ; but hee who destroyes a good Booke, kills Reason it selfe, kills the Image of God, as it were in the eye. Many a Man lives a burden to the Earth ; but a good Booke is the pretious life-blood of a master spirit, imbalm'd and treasur'd up on purpose to a Life beyond Life.

JOHN MILTON

Areopagitica

OF bad books we can never read too little : of the good never too much. . . .

Only those writers profit us whose understanding is

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quicker, more lucid than our own, by whose brain we indeed think for a time, who quicken our thoughts, and lead us whither alone we could not find our way.

ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER

Parerga und Paralipomena

BOOKS, dear books,
Have been, and are my comforts, morn and night,
Adversity, prosperity, at home,
Abroad, health, sickness, — Good or ill report,
The same firm friends; the same refreshments rich,
And source of consolation.

REV. WILLIAM DODD

Thoughts in Prison

I MIGHT fitly speak to you of books; and here, while considering principles to govern the student in his reading, it would be pleasant to dwell on the profitable delights, better than a “shower of cent per cent,” on the society, better than fashion or dissipation, and on that completeness of satisfaction, outvying the possession of wealth, and making the “library dukedom large enough,” — all of which are found in books.

CHARLES SUMNER

Address on Granville Sharp

The Souls of Books ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

I

SIT here and muse! — it is an antique room —
High-roof'd, with casements, thro' whose purple
pane

Silent Friendly Spirits

Unwilling Daylight steals amidst the gloom,
Shy as a fearful stranger.

There THEY reign
(In loftier pomp than waking life had known)
The Kings of Thought! — not crown'd until the grave.
When Agamemnon sinks into the tomb,
The beggar Homer mounts the Monarch's throne!
Ye ever living and imperial Souls,
Who rule us from the page in which ye breathe,
All that divide us from the clod ye gave! —
Law — Order — Love — Intelligence — The Sense
Of Beauty — Music and the Minstrel's wreath! —
What were our wanderings if without your goals?
As air and light, the glory ye dispense,
Becomes our being — who of us can tell
What he had been had Cadmus never taught
The art that fixes into form the thought —
Had Plato never spoken from his cell,
Or his high harp blind Homer never strung? —
Kinder all earth hath grown since genial Shakespeare
sung!

II

Hark! while we muse, without the walls is heard
The various murmur of the laboring crowd.
How still, within those archive-cells interr'd,
The Calm Ones reign! — and yet they rouse the loud
Passions and tumults of the circling world!
From them, how many a youthful Tully caught
The zest and ardour of the eager Bar;
From them, how many a young Ambition sought

The Friendship of Books

Gay meteors glancing o'er the sand afar —
By them each restless wing has been unfurl'd,
And their ghosts urge each rival's rushing car!
They made yon Preacher zealous for the truth;
They made yon Poet wistful for the star;
Gave Age its pastime — fired the cheek of Youth —
The unseen sires of all our beings are, —

III

And now so still! This, Cicero, is thy heart;
I hear it beating thro' each purple line.
This is thyself, Anacreon — yet, thou art
Wreath'd, as in Athens, with the Cnidian vine.
I ope thy pages, Milton, and, behold,
Thy spirit meets me in the haunted ground! —
Sublime and eloquent, as while, of old,
“It flamed and sparkled in its crystal bound;”
These are yourselves — your life of life! The Wise
(Minstrel of Sage) *out* of their books are clay;
But *in* their books, as from their graves, they rise,
Angels — that, side by side, upon our way,
Walk with and warm us!

Hark! the world so loud,
And *they*, the movers of the world, so still!
What gives this beauty to the grave? the shroud
Scarce wraps the Poet than at once there cease
Envy and Hate! “Nine cities claim him dead,
Thro' which the living Homer begg'd his bread!”
And what the charm that can such health distil
From wither'd leaves — oft poisons in their bloom?
We call some books immoral! *Do they live?*

Silent Friendly Spirits

If so, believe me, TIME hath made them pure.
In Books, the veriest wicked rest in peace —
God wills that nothing evil should endure ;
The grosser parts fly off and leave the whole,
As the dust leaves the disembodied soul !
Come from thy niche, Lucretius ! Thou didst give
Man the black creed of Nothing in the tomb !

Well, when we read thee, does the dogma taint ?
No ; with a listless eye we pass it o'er,
And linger only on the hues that paint
The Poet's spirit lovelier than his lore.
None learn from thee to cavil with their God ;
None commune with thy genius to depart
Without a loftier instinct of the heart.
Thou mak'st no Atheist — thou but mak'st the mind
Richer in gifts which Atheists best confute —
FANCY AND THOUGHT ! 'Tis these that from the sod,
Lift us ! The life which soars above the brute
Ever and mightiest, breathes from a great Poet's lute !
Lo ! that grim Merriment of Hatred ; — born
Of him, — the Master-Mocker of Mankind,
Beside the grin of whose malignant spleen,
Voltaire's gay sarcasm seems a smile serene, —
Do we not place it in our children's hands,
Leading young Hope through Lemuel's fabled lands ? —
God's and man's libel in that foul yahoo ! —
Well, and what mischief can the libel do ?
O impotence of Genius to belie
Its glorious task — its mission from the sky !
Swift wrote this book to wreak a ribald scorn
On aught the Man should love or Priest should mourn —

The Friendship of Books

And lo ! the book, from all its ends beguil'd,
A harmless wonder to some happy child !

IV

All books grow homilies by time ; they are
Temples, at once, and Landmarks. In them, we
Who *but* for them, upon that inch of ground
We call "THE PRESENT," from the cell could see
No daylight trembling on the dungeon bar ;
Turn, as we list, the globe's great axle round,
Traverse all space, and number every star,
And feel the Near less household than the Far !
There is no Past, so long as Books shall live !
A disinterr'd Pompeii wakes again
For him who seeks yon well ; lost cities give
Up their untarnish'd wonders, and the reign
Of Jove revives and Saturn : — At our will
Rise dome and tower on Delphi's sacred hill ;
Bloom Cimon's trees in Academe ; — along
Leucadia's headland, sighs the Lesbian's song ;
With Egypt's Queen once more we sail the Nile,
And learn how worlds are barter'd for a smile ; —
Rise up, ye walls, with gardens blooming o'er,
Ope but that page — lo, Babylon once more !

V

Ye make the Past our heritage and home ;
And is this all ? No ; by each prophet-sage —
No ; by the herald souls that Greece and Rome
Sent forth, like hymns, to greet the Morning Star

Silent Friendly Spirits

That rose on Bethlehem — by thy golden page
Melodious Plato — by thy solemn dreams,
World-wearied Tully ! — and, above ye all,
By THIS, the Everlasting Monument
Of God to mortals, on whose front the beams
Flash glory-breathing day — our lights ye are
To the dark Bourne beyond ; in you are sent
The types of Truths whose life is THE TO-COME ;
In you soars up the Adam from the fall ;
In you the FUTURE as the PAST is given —
Ev'n in our death ye bid us hail our birth ; —
Unfold these pages, and behold the Heaven,
Without one grave-stone left upon the Earth ?

EDWARD BULWER, LORD LYTON

A NATURAL turn for reading and intellectual pursuits probably preserved me from the moral shipwreck so apt to befall those who are deprived in early life of the paternal pilotage. At the least my books kept me from the ring, the dog-pit, the tavern, the saloon, with their degrading orgies. For the closet associate of Pope and Addison, the mind accustomed to the noble though silent discourse of Shakespeare and Milton, will hardly seek or put up with low company and slang. Later experience enables me to depose to the comfort and blessing that literature can prove in seasons of sickness or sorrow — how powerfully intellectual pursuits can help in keeping the head from crazing, and the heart from breaking — nay, not to be too grave, how generous mental food can even atone for too meagre diet — rich fare on the paper for short commons on the cloth. . . . Many, many a dreary, weary hour have I got over —

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many a gloomy misgiving postponed — many a mental or bodily annoyance forgotten, by help of the tragedies and comedies of our dramatists and novelists! Many a trouble has been soothed by the still small voice of the moral philosopher — many a dragon-like care charmed to sleep by the sweet song of the poet; for all which I cry incessantly, not aloud, but in my heart, thanks and honor to the glorious masters of the pen, and the great inventors of the press!

THOMAS HOOD

Letter to the Manchester Athenæum

POETRY has a key which unlocks some more inward cabinet of my nature than is accessible to any other power. I cannot explain it or account for it, or say what faculty it appeals to. The chord which vibrates strongly becomes blurred and invisible in proportion to the intensity of its impulse. Often the mere rhyme, the cadence and sound of the words, awaken this strange feeling in me. Not only do all the happy associations of my early life, that before lay scattered, take beautiful shapes, like iron dust at the approach of the magnet; but something dim and vague beyond these moves itself in me with the uncertain sound of a far-off sea. My sympathy with the remotest eld becomes that of a bystander and an actor. . . .

The grand symphony of Wordsworth's Ode rolls through me, and I tremble, as the air does with the gathering thunders of the organ. My clay seems to have a sympathy with the mother earth whence it was taken, to have a memory of all that our orb has ever witnessed of great and noble, of sorrowful and glad.

Silent Friendly Spirits

With the wise Samian, I can touch the mouldering buckler of Euphorbus and claim an interest in it deeper than that of its antiquity. I have been the bosom friend of Leander and Romeo. I seem to go behind Musæus and Shakespeare, and to get my intelligence at first hand. Sometimes in my sorrow, a line from Spenser steals in upon my memory as if by some vitality and external volition of its own, like a blast from the distant trump of a knight pricking towards the court of Faerie, and I am straightway lifted out of that sadness and shadow into the sunshine of a previous and long-agone experience. Often, too, this seemingly lawless species of association overcomes me with a sense of sadness. Seeing a waterfall or a forest for the first time, I have a feeling of something gone, a vague regret, that in some former state, I have drank up the wine of their beauty, and left to the defrauded present only the muddy lees. Yet, again, what divine over-compensation, when the same memory (shall I call it ?), or phantasy, lets fall a drop of its invisible elixir into my cup, and I behold to-day, which before showed but forlorn and beggared, clothed in the royal purple, and with the golden sceptre of a line of majestic ancestry !

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

Conversations on Some of the Old Poets

BOOK-LOVE is a home-feeling — a sweet bond of family union — and a never-failing source of domestic enjoyment. It sheds a charm over the quiet fireside, unlocks the hidden sympathies of human hearts, beguiles the weary hours of sickness or solitude, and unites kindred spirits in a sweet companionship of sentiment and idea.

FRAZER'S MAGAZINE: *Book Love*

The Friendship of Books

BOOK-LOVE is the angel that keeps watch by the poor man's hearth, and hallows it; saving him from the temptations that lurk beyond its charmed circle; giving him new thoughts and noble aspirations, and lifting him, as it were, from the mere mechanical drudgery of his everyday occupation. The wife blesses it, as she sits smiling and sewing, alternately listening to her husband's voice, or hushing the child upon her knee. She blesses it for keeping him near her, and making him cheerful, and manly, and kind-hearted, — albeit understanding little of what he reads, and reverencing it for that reason all the more in him.

FRAZER'S MAGAZINE: *Book Love*

THERE are some books which forcibly recall calm and tranquil scenes of by-gone happiness. We hear again the gentle tones of a once familiar voice long since hushed. We can remember the very passage where the reader paused awhile to play the critic, or where that eloquent voice suddenly faltered. . . . Books read for the first time at some particular place or period of our existence may thus become hallowed forevermore, or we love them because others loved them also in by-gone days.

Books written by those with whom it has been our happy privilege to dwell in close companionship and sweet interchange of sentiment and idea are exceedingly precious. In reading them, we converse, as it were, with the author in his happiest mood, recognize the rare eloquence to which we have often sat and listened spell-bound, and feel proud to find our affectionate and reverential homage confirmed by the unanimous plaudits of

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the world. The golden key, before mentioned, has been given into our keeping, and we unlock at will the sacred and hidden recesses of Genius and association.

FRAZER'S MAGAZINE: *Book Love*

AS to collectors, it is quite true that they do not in general read their books successively straight through, and the practice of desultory reading, as it is sometimes termed, must be treated as part of their case, and if a failing, one cognate with their habit of collecting. They are notoriously addicted to the practice of standing arrested on some round of a ladder, where, having mounted up for some certain book, they have by wayward chance fallen upon another, in which, at the first opening, has come up a passage which fascinates the finder as the eye of the Ancient Mariner fascinated the wedding-guest, and compels him to stand there, poised on his uneasy perch, and read. Peradventure the matter so perused suggests another passage in some other volume which it will be satisfactory and interesting to find, and so another and another search is made, while the hours pass by unnoticed, and the day seems all too short for the pursuit which is a luxury and an enjoyment, at the same time that it fills the mind with varied knowledge and wisdom.

JOHN HILL BURTON
The Book-Hunter

ENGLAND has two books, one which it has made and one which has made it: Shakespeare and the Bible.

VICTOR HUGO

The Friendship of Books

My Books



AH! well I love these books of mine,
That stand so trimly on their shelves,
With here and there a broken line
 (Flat "quartos" jostling modest "twelves") —
A curious company, I own;
 The poorest ranking with their betters:
In brief, — a thing almost unknown, —
 A Pure Democracy of Letters.

A motley gathering are they, —
 Some fairly worth their weight in gold;
Some just too good to throw away;
 Some scarcely worth the place they hold.
Yet well I love them, one and all, —
 These friends so meek and unobtrusive,
Who never fail to come at call,
 Nor (if I scold them) turn abusive!

If I have favorites here and there,
 And, like a monarch, pick and choose,
I never meet an angry stare
 That *this* I take and *that* refuse;
No discords rise my soul to vex
 Among these peaceful book-relations,
Nor envious strife of age or sex
 To mar my quiet lucubrations.

And they have still another merit,
 Which otherwhere one vainly seeks,
- Whate'er may be an author's spirit,

Silent Friendly Spirits

He never *uninvited* speaks ;
And should he prove a fool or clown,
Unworth the precious time you're spending,
How quickly you can "put him down,"
Or "shut him up," without offending !

Here — pleasing sight ! — the touchy brood
Of critics from dissension cease ;
And — stranger still ! — no more at feud,
Polemics smile, and keep the peace.
See ! side by side, all free from strife
(Save what the heavy page may smother),
The gentle "Christians" who in life,
For conscience' sake, had burned each other !

I call them friends, these quiet books ;
And well the title they may claim,
Who always give me cheerful looks ;
(What living friend has done the same ?)
And, for companionship, how few,
As these, my cronies, ever present,
Of all the friends I ever knew
Have been so useful and so pleasant ?

JOHN GODFREY SAXE

WE are here invited to trace the stream of English poetry. But whether we set ourselves, as here, to follow only one of the several streams that make the mighty river of poetry, or whether we seek to know them all, our governing thought should be the same. We should conceive of poetry worthily, and more highly than it has been the custom to conceive of it. We

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should conceive of it as capable of higher uses, and called to higher destinies, than those which in general men have assigned to hitherto. More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry. Science, I say, will appear incomplete without it. For finely and truly does Wordsworth call poetry "the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science"; and what is a countenance without its expression? Again, Wordsworth finely and truly calls poetry "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge"; our religion, parading evidences such as those on which the popular mind relies now; our philosophy, pluming itself on its reasonings about causation and finite and infinite being; what are they but the shadows and dreams and false shows of knowledge? The day will come when we shall wonder at ourselves for having trusted to them, for having taken them seriously; and the more we perceive their hollowness the more we shall prize "the breath and finer spirit of knowledge" offered to us by poetry.

But if we conceive thus highly of the destinies of poetry, we must also set our standard for poetry high, since poetry, to be capable of fulfilling such high destinies, must be poetry of a high order of excellence. We must accustom ourselves to a high standard and to a strict judgment. Sainte-Beuve relates that Napoleon one day said, when somebody was spoken of in his presence as a charlatan: "Charlatan as much as you please; but where is there *not* charlatanism?" — "Yes," answers Sainte-

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Beuve, "in politics, in the art of governing mankind, that is perhaps true. But in the order of thought, in art, the glory, the eternal honor, is that charlatanism shall find no entrance; herein lies the inviolableness of that noble portion of man's being." It is admirably said, and let us hold fast to it. In poetry, which is thought and art in one, it is the glory, the eternal honor, that charlatanism shall find no entrance; that this noble sphere be kept inviolate and inviolable. Charlatanism is for confusing or obliterating the distinctions between excellent and inferior, sound and unsound or only half-sound, true and untrue or only half-true. It is charlatanism, conscious or unconscious, whenever we confuse or obliterate these. And in poetry, more than anywhere else, it is unpermissible to confuse or obliterate them. For in poetry the distinction between excellent and inferior, sound and unsound or only half-sound, true and untrue or only half-true, is of paramount importance. It is of paramount importance because of the high destinies of poetry. In poetry, as a criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty, the spirit of our race will find, we have said, as time goes on and as other helps fail, its consolation and stay. But the consolation and stay will be of power in proportion to the power of the criticism of life. And the criticism of life will be of power in proportion as the poetry conveying it is excellent rather than inferior, sound rather than unsound or half-sound, true rather than untrue or half-true.

The best poetry is what we want; the best poetry will be found to have a power of forming, sustaining, and delighting us, as nothing else can. A clearer, deeper

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sense of the best in poetry, and of the strength and joy to be drawn from it, is the most precious benefit which we can gather from a poetical collection. . . . And yet in the very nature and conduct of such a collection there is inevitably something which tends to obscure in us the consciousness of what our benefit should be, and to distract us from the pursuit of it. We should therefore steadily set it before our minds at the outset, and should compel ourselves to revert constantly to the thought of it as we proceed.

Yes; constantly in reading poetry, a sense for the best, the really excellent, and of the strength and joy to be drawn from it, should be present in our minds and should govern our estimate of what we read. But this real estimate, the only true one, is liable to be superseded, if we are not watchful, by two other kinds of estimate, the historic estimate and the personal estimate, both of which are fallacious. A poet or a poem may count to us historically, they may count to us on grounds personal to ourselves, and they may count to us really. They may count to us historically. The course of development of a nation's language, thought, and poetry is profoundly interesting; and by regarding a poet's work as a stage in this course of development we may easily bring ourselves to make it of more importance as poetry than in itself it really is, we may come to use a language of quite exaggerated praise in criticising it; in short, to overrate it. So arises in our poetic judgments the fallacy caused by the estimate which we may call historic. Then, again, a poet or a poem may count to us on grounds personal to ourselves. Our personal affinities, likings, and circum-

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stances have great power to sway our estimate of this or that poet's work, and to make us attach more importance to it as poetry than in itself it really possesses, because to us it is, or has been, of high importance. Here also we overrate the object of our interest, and apply to it a language of praise which is quite exaggerated. And thus we get the source of a second fallacy in our poetic judgments — the fallacy caused by an estimate which we may call personal.

Both fallacies are natural. It is evident how naturally the study of the history and development of a poetry may incline a man to pause over reputations and works once conspicuous but now obscure, and to quarrel with a careless public for skipping, in obedience to mere tradition and habit, from one famous name or work in its national poetry to another, ignorant of what it misses, and of the reason for keeping what it keeps, and of the whole process of growth in its poetry. The French have become diligent students of their own early poetry, which they long neglected; the study makes many of them dissatisfied with their so-called classical poetry, the court-tragedy, of the seventeenth century, a poetry which Pellisson long ago reproached with its want of the true poetic stamp, with its *politesse stérile et rampante*, but which nevertheless has reigned in France as absolutely as if it had been the perfection of classical poetry indeed. The dissatisfaction is natural; yet a lively and accomplished critic, M. Charles d'Héricault, the editor of Clément Marot, goes too far when he says that "the cloud of glory playing round a classic is a mist as dangerous to the future of a literature as it is intolerable for the purposes of history." "It hinders," he goes on,

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"it hinders us from seeing more than one single point, the culminating and exceptional point; the summary, fictitious and arbitrary, of a thought and of a work. It substitutes a halo for a physiognomy, it puts a statue where there was once a man, and hiding from us all trace of the labor, the attempts, the weaknesses, the failures, it claims not study but veneration; it does not show us how the thing is done, it imposes upon us a model. Above all, for the historian this creation of classic personages is inadmissible; for it withdraws the poet from his time, from his proper life, it breaks historical relationships, it blinds criticism by conventional admiration, and renders the investigation of literary origins unacceptable. It gives us a human personage no longer, but a God seated immovable amidst His perfect work, like Jupiter on Olympus; and hardly will it be possible for the young student, to whom such work is exhibited at such a distance from him, to believe that it did not issue ready made from that divine head."

All this is brilliantly and telling said, but we must plead for a distinction. Everything depends on the reality of a poet's classic character. If he is a dubious classic, let us sift him; if he is a false classic, let us explode him. But if he is a real classic, if his work belongs to the class of the very best (for this is the true and right meaning of the word *classic*, *classical*), then the great thing for us is to feel and enjoy his work as deeply as ever we can, and to appreciate the wide difference between it and all work which has not the same high character. This is what is salutary, this is what is formative; this is the great benefit to be got from the study of poetry. Everything which interferes with it, which hinders it,

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is injurious. True, we must read our classic with open eyes, and not with eyes blinded with superstition; we must perceive when his work comes short, when it drops out of the class of the very best, and we must rate it, in such cases, at its proper value. But the use of this negative criticism is not in itself, it is entirely in its enabling us to have a clearer sense and a deeper enjoyment of what is truly excellent. To trace the labor, the attempts, the weaknesses, the failures of a genuine classic, to acquaint oneself with his time and his life and his historical relationships, is mere literary dilettantism unless it has that clear sense and deeper enjoyment for its end. It may be said that the more we know about a classic, the better we shall enjoy him; and, if we lived as long as Methuselah and had all of us heads of perfect clearness and wills of perfect steadfastness, this might be true in fact as it is plausible in theory. But the case here is much the same as the case with the Greek and Latin studies of our schoolboys. The elaborate philological groundwork which we require them to lay is in theory an admirable preparation for appreciating the Greek and Latin authors worthily. The more thoroughly we lay the groundwork, the better we shall be able, it may be said, to enjoy the authors. True, if time were not so short, and schoolboys' wits not so soon tired and their power of attention exhausted; only, as it is, the elaborate philological preparation goes on, but the authors are little known and less enjoyed. So with the investigator of "historic origins" in poetry. He ought to enjoy the true classic all the better for his investigations; he often is distracted from the enjoyment of the best, and with the less good he overbusies himself, and is prone

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to overrate it in proportion to the trouble which it has cost him.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

The Study of Poetry

NOT a valuable set,
Does it follow therefore
That I may not have a pet
Book or two to care for?
Tell me, does a man of sense
Judge of books by their expense?

How, alas! can I afford
Precious vellum covers
Stamped with badge of prince or lord
Or of royal lovers?
Long must be their purse who gain
Specimens of Roger Payne.

Some begin but never end,
Some have no beginning,
Some are tattered and transcend
All the arts of pinning.
Children love with love most warm
Dolls with least of human form.

Some are clean, the average
Are a trifle dirty,
Time is apt to soil a page
Say of sixteen-thirty.
Shall I value comrades less
For their unbecoming dress?

Silent Friendly Spirits

Some are Latin, some are Greek,
Some are French and Spanish,
One or two can even speak
Portuguese or Danish.
(Names of nations must at times
Be content with "printers' rimes.")

Here is farce or comedy,
Here grave verse like Dante's,
Bacon or Pascal may be
Neighbors of Cervantes;
Books like strangers in a street
Know not whom they chance to meet.

Delicate Italian charm,
Sagas grim from Sweden,
Songs that breathe a holy calm
Like the calm of Eden,
Scarce a page that has not taught
Something worthy to be thought.

Most of them are of the past,
Of a bygone fashion,
Some of them are deeply cast
In a mould of passion,
Others treat the world and men
With a Rabelaisian pen.

Many a book of olden time
Opens with a sonnet,
Once no work appeared but rime
Must be written on it;

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'Twas no credit to compose
Flatteries in humble prose.

Comrades, let me dwell with you,
Hear your sobs and laughter,
Men have never been as true,
Will they be hereafter?
None knows solitude who spends
Life with books when books are friends.

JAMES WILLIAMS

A Lawyer's Leisure

I CANNOT think the glorious world of mind,
Embalm'd in books, which I can only see
In patches, though I read my moments blind,
Is to be lost to me.

I have a thought that, as we live elsewhere,
So will these dear creations of the brain;
That what I lose unread, I'll find, and there
Take up my joy again.

O then the bliss of blisses, to be freed
From all the wonts by which the world is driven;
With liberty and endless time to read
The libraries of Heaven!

ROBERT LEIGHTON

Records and Other Poems

AS round these well-selected shelves one looks,
Remembering years of reading leisure flown,
It kills all hope to think how many books
He still must leave unknown.

Silent Friendly Spirits

But when to thoughts, instead of books, he comes,
Request grows less for what he cannot read,
If he reflects how many learned tomes
One thought may supersede.

So, let him be a toiling, unread man,
And the idea, like an added sense,
Of God informing all his life, he can
With many a book dispense.

The fine conviction, too, that Death, like Sleep,
Wakes into higher dreams — this thought will brook
Denial of the libraries, and keep
The key of many a book.

ROBERT LEIGHTON

Records and Other Poems

The Solace of Books ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

O FINEST essence of delicious rest !
To bid for some short space the busy mill
Of anxious, ever grinding thought be still ;
And let the weary brain and throbbing breast
Be by another's cooling hand caressed.

This volume in my hand, I hold a charm
Which lifts me out of reach of wrong or harm.
I sail away from trouble ; and most blessed
Of every blessing, can myself forget :

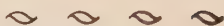
Can rise above the instance low and poor
Into the mighty law that governs yet.

This hinged cover, like a well-hung door,
Shuts out the noises of the jangling day,
These fair leaves fan unwelcome thoughts away.

The Spectator, Jan. 16, 1886

The Friendship of Books

Ballade of the Bookworm



FAR in the Past I peer, and see
A Child upon the Nursery floor,
A Child with books upon his knee,
Who asks, like Oliver, for more !
The number of his years is IV,
And yet in Letters hath he skill,
How deep he dives in Fairy-lore !
The Books I loved, I love them still !

One gift the Fairies gave me : (Three
They commonly bestowed of yore)
The love of Books, the Golden Key
That opens the Enchanted Door ;
Behind it *Bluebeard* lurks, and o'er
And o'er *Jack* his Giants kill,
And there is all *Aladdin's* store, —
The Books I loved, I love them still !

Take all, but leave my Books to me !
These heavy creels of old we bore
We fill not now, nor wander free,
Nor wear the heart that once we wore ;
Not now each River seems to pour
His waters from the Muses' hill ;
Though something's gone from stream and shore,
The Books I loved, I love them still !

ENVOY

Fate, that art Queen by shore and sea,
We bow submissive to thy will,

Silent Friendly Spirits

Ah grant, by some benign decree,
The Books I loved — to love them still.

ANDREW LANG

Ballades in Blue China

Ballade of his Books



HERE stand my Books, line upon line
They reach the roof, and row by row,
They speak of faded tastes of mine,
And things I did, but do not, know:
Old school books, useless long ago,
Old Logics, where the spirit, railed in,
Could scarcely answer "yes" or "no" —
The many things I've tried and failed in!

Here's Villon, in morocco fine
(The Poet starved, in mud and snow)
Glatigny does not crave to dine,
And René's tears forget to flow.
And here's a work by Mrs. Crowe,
With hosts of ghosts and bogies jailed in;
Ah, all my ghosts have gone below —
The many things I've tried and failed in!

He's touched, this mouldy Greek divine,
The Princess D'Este's hand of snow;
And here the arms of D'Hoym shine,
And there's a tear-bestained Rousseau:
Here's Carlyle shrieking "woe on woe"
(The first edition, this, he wailed in);
I once believed in him — but oh,
"The many things I've tried and failed in!"

The Friendship of Books

ENVOY

Prince, tastes may differ ; mine and thine
Quite other balances are scaled in ;
May you succeed, though I repine —
“The many things I’ve tried and failed in !”

ANDREW LANG

Ballades in Blue China

Ballade of the Book-hunter ~ ~ ~ ~

IN torrid heats of late July,
In March, beneath the bitter *Bise*,
He book-hunts while the loungers fly, —
He book-hunts, though December freeze ;
In breeches baggy at the knees,
And heedless of the public jeers,
For these, for these, he hoards his fees, —
Aldines, Bodonis, Elzevirs.

No dismal stall escapes his eye,
He turns o’er tomes of low degrees,
There soiled romanticists may lie,
Or Restoration comedies ;
Each tract that flutters in the breeze
For him is charged with hopes and fears,
In mouldy novels fancy sees
Aldines, Bodonis, Elzevirs.

With restless eyes that peer and spy,
Sad eyes that heed not skies nor trees,
In dismal nooks he loves to pry,
Whose motto evermore is *spes* !
But ah ! the fabled treasure flees ;

Silent Friendly Spirits

Grown rarer with the fleeting years,
In rich men's shelves they take their ease, —
Aldines, Bodonis, Elzevirs !

ENVOY

Prince, all the things that tease and please, —
Fame, hope, wealth, kisses, cheers, and tears,
What are they but such toys as these —
Aldines, Bodonis, Elzevirs ?

ANDREW LANG

Ballades in Blue China

WHEN do I love you most, sweet books of mine ?
In strenuous morns when o'er your leaves I pore,
Austerely bent to win austerest lore,
Forgetting how the dewy meadow'd shine ;
Or afternoons when honeysuckles twine
About the seat, and to some dreamy shore
Of old romance, where lovers evermore
Keep blissful hours, I follow at your sign ?

Yea ! ye are precious then, but most to me
Ere lamplight dawneth, when low croons the fire
To whispering twilight in my little room ;
And eyes read not, but, sitting silently,
I feel your great hearts throbbing deep inquire,
And hear your breathing round me in the gloom.

RICHARD LE GALLIENNE

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